2016

Strategy and Profitability: Managing Profits in Inflation Economy

Mohamed Jaffar Mohamed Sharaaz
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Mohamed Sharaaz

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Patricia Fusch, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Peter Anthony, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Denise Land, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2016

Abstract

Strategy and Profitability: Managing Profits in Inflation Economy

by

M.J.M.Sharaaz

MBA, Postgraduate Institute of Management, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, 2013

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2016

Abstract

The inflation rate in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) rose to 5-year highs in 2014 and higher by 28% in the first half of 2015. This situation has challenged business managers to sustain business goals. Guided by Kaplan and Norton's balanced scorecard framework. the purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies business managers use to maintain profitability with rising operating costs. Two organizations in Dubai, United Arab Emirates were purposefully sampled for this multiple case study. Data were collected through multiple semistructured interviews of a single senior manager from each organization, then triangulated with company e-mails and focus group interviews of 2 junior managers from each of the organizations. All data were analyzed using a 5-phased cycle of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding to understand the emerging patterns. The themes revealed cost reduction initiatives and revenue enhancements initiatives as the key strategies used by the business managers. The approach and direction used in these strategies showed variance based on cost and revenue drivers of the organizations. The findings of the study can be a guide for business managers to understand the essence of effective business strategies that counter challenging economic environments, thus sustaining profitability and developing additional employment opportunities for the surrounding community.

Strategy and Profitability: Managing Profits in Inflation Economy

by

M.J.M.Sharaaz

MBA, Postgraduate Institute of Management, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, 2013

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2016

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my wife, Tania, and daughter, Sakeena. Your patience, support, and sacrifices during my doctoral study were the strength and encouragement for me. Thank you with the fondest love. This achievement would not have been possible without you being with me.

Acknowledgments

Thank you, Dr. Patricia Fusch, my chair, for guidance, encouragement, and mentoring support extended during the journey. I would also like to thank Dr. Peter Anthony and Dr. Denise Land, my committee members, for their valuable and insightful feedback that enabled me to progress this journey with compliance. My sincere gratitude goes to Dr. Freda Turner for motivation and inspirations given, and I thank my family and friends, who have been extremely understanding and supportive during this period. You all have been part of my doctoral success and I would not have achieved this milestone without you.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Surging real estate prices challenge business stability in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). As per the Coldwell Banker Richard Ellis (CBRE) Global Research and Consulting Report (Q2, 2014), Dubai office rental was growing at the rate of 3% quarter-on-quarter and 25% year-on-year, while housing rental had grown by 20% as compared to Q2 of 2013. This situation has challenged business managers regarding organizational operating expenses for labor costs, rentals and utility costs, and transportation and communication costs. Understanding the views of and effectiveness of strategies deployed by some business leaders forms essential knowledge for practitioners and academics.

Background of the Problem

Dubai, UAE is the seventh most influential city in the world according to Kotkin (2014). Dubai has earned its reputation as the business hub of the Middle East (Kotkin, 2014). Kotkin ranked all cities based on eight criteria other than the conventional indicator: gross domestic products (GDP). The eight criteria considered were: (a) amount of foreign direct investment, (b) concentration of corporate headquarters, (c) number of business niches dominated, (d) air connectivity, (e) strength of producer services, (f) financial services, (g) technology and media power, and (h) racial diversity (Kotkin, 2014).

In 2013, Dubai’s nonfinancial corporations sectors contributed 90% to the GDP (Gross Domestic Product), which recorded a growth of 5% over 2012 (GDP, 2013). The major contributors of the sector were wholesale, retail trade, and repairs amounting to 29%, and manufacturing, transport, storage, and communication amounting to 28% of the GDP (GDP, 2013). The GDP statistics and the world influential cities rankings suggest Dubai is an economy that is dependent on trading and services. The press release from Dubai foreign direct investment (FDI) elaborating Dubai as a trade and services-driven regional hub also validates this notion (Dubai FDI, 2012). Managing operational costs becomes an important process for business leaders to maintain competitiveness and profitability (Munjal & Sharma, 2012).

The recent surge in rental and utility costs, which contribute to 43% of the weight cost index (Inflation and Consumer Price Index, 2015), has raised concerns about employee cost of living, primarily regarding housing, education, and food (Everington, 2014). Dubai is an expatriate worker dominated economy (Population Bulletin, 2013) and, therefore, employees expect employers to compensate them to ease the pressure of household expenses (HR Observer, 2014). Many organizations have considered the employee burden on the cost of living and possible threat into account and considered revising their wages to support the demands (Everington, 2014). Possible wage increases may have an influence on business operating costs (Onghena, Meersman, & Voorde, 2014).

Problem Statement

Economic inflation affects the financial performance of organizations (Jablonski & Kuczowic, 2015). The inflation rate in Dubai rose to 5-year highs in 2014 and rose further by 28% in the first half of 2015 (Inflation and Consumer Price Index, 2015). Rent and utility costs, miscellaneous goods and service costs, and communication costs have risen by 361%, 197%, and 262% respectively since 2013 (Inflation and Consumer Price Index, 2014). The general business problem was that some business leaders strive to maintain business profitability without accounting for inflation. The specific business problem was that some business managers often lack strategies to maintain profitability with rising operating costs.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies business managers use to maintain profitability with rising operating costs. Two senior business managers from two organizations in Dubai participated in semistructured face-to-face interviews to describe their strategies toward successfully maintaining the profitability of the organization. Based on the answers to the face-to-face interviews, four junior managers of these organizations in Dubai participated in a semistructured focus group interview to methodologically triangulate all data. The population was appropriate for the study because these senior managers were responsible for the businesses' profitability while the junior managers executed the strategies. Successfully implemented strategies of organizations become examples of best practices for business managers in managing resources effectively in an environment of rising operational costs that challenge the profit sustainability.

Nature of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies used by business leaders in Dubai toward maintaining profitability in an environment of escalating operating costs. My intent was to capture the effective processes, actions, and changes some of the successful organizational leaders adapted in maintaining profitability. I considered qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research methods. The qualitative design was effective in exploring processes, narrating meanings, and understanding business problems (Mboga, 2013); a quantitative design explains relationships between predetermined variables (Michel & Wiid, 2013). The purpose of the study was to explore strategies the business leaders used in maintaining profitability; the research process focused on emerging processes and practices rather than determining the relationship of variables or compare outcomes against different predefined environments. I deemed the qualitative research method appropriate for my study

The case study method facilitates the process of exploring a specific, complex problem in the real world (Khan, 2014; Parry, Mumford, Bower, & Watts, 2014; Yin, 2013). Researchers use the case study method to find answers to *how* and *what* questions (Yin, 2014). These types of studies identify the links between events over time (Parry et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). Diaconu (2012) used the case study method to inquire about operational efficiencies to understand how low-cost airlines emerge and operate. Nwabueze (2012) used the case study design to inquire how to improve manufacturing processes. In both studies, the case study was effective in identifying possible processes, programs, and activities for improving business efficiencies (Diaconu, 2012; Nwabueze, 2012). Based on the inquiring nature of this study, which aims to understand how business managers defined the process, programs, and activities in managing their escalating operational cost, a case study design was considered more effective than other qualitative research designs.

Research Question

The overarching research question for this qualitative case study was: What strategies do business leaders use to maintain profitability with rising operational costs?

Interview Question

Q1. How do you compare the business operational costs of 2014 against 2012 and 2013?

Q2. What is the impact of cost increases to your business operation?

Q3. How would one quantify and compare the impact? Can I see any supporting document on the same (If possible)?

Q4. How did you mitigate these costs?

Q5. What strategic changes did you make to your organization's operations in view of sustaining the profitability in an environment of rising costs?

Q5. What are the alternative actions you considered to mitigate the impact to the business?

Q6. How did you recognize the implications of cost increases to the business?

Q7. What were the guiding policies of developing the solution for mitigating the impact of escalating costs?

Q8. How would you define the alignment of strategic actions to the organization's profitability?

Q9. What was the process deployed in implementing the new strategy?

Q10. How did the actions align to the problem?

Q11. What challenges did you experience in implementing the new policies/ strategy?

Q12. How did you overcome those challenges?

Q13. How did you measure the effectiveness of the new strategies?

Q14. Would you like to discuss any additional information in line with our discussion that I may have overlooked?

Focus Group Interview Questions

Q1. What influence did inflation have on your performance?

Q2. How did you communicate these challenges to senior management?

Q3. How did senior management of the organization react to these challenges?

Q4. What strategic changes were made to sustaining the profitability of the business operations?

Q5. What impact did the new strategy have on your present performance?

Q6. How would you describe the current performance of your department/ division?

Q7. Would you like to discuss any additional information in line with our discussion that I may have overlooked?

Conceptual Framework

Kaplan and Norton introduced the framework of the *balanced scorecard* (BSC) in 1992. Kaplan and Norton (1992) defined the BSC as a strategic approach to performance management systems that facilitates managers with translating their vision into strategies. BSC includes a focus on the importance of balancing financial and operational performance measurements for organizational success (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). Dubey (2013) used the framework of BSC in implementing strategic *nanotechnology* within a product portfolio and then measured the continuous performance improvement of an organization. Mukherjee and Pandit (2009) explained the use of BSC as a strategic mapping process that acts as an integrating device for a variety of corporate programs. I determined that inflationary conditions in Dubai demand organizational leaders and managers devise a variety of corporate programs to measure performance from financial and operational perspectives. The BSC framework aligned well with the research objectives.

Definition of Terms

Cross-selling: Cross-selling is defined as selling additional products to the same customer that are different from what the customer had purchased or has expressed interest in (Schmitz, You-Cheong, & Lilien, 2014).

Organic growth: Organic growth occurs when organizations extend their existing resources to reach new market opportunities (Lockett & Wild, 2013).

Outsourced: Outsourced is defined as a process of obtaining traditionally produced products or performed services from a source outside the organization (Dolgui & Proth, 2013).

Supply chain management: Supply chain management is a process of managing organizations' upstream and downstream supply entities with an objective of reducing costs and enhancing responsive (Melnyk, Narasimhan, & DeCampos, 2014)

Up-selling: Up-selling is defined as an increase of order volume through selling more units or upgrading the customer to a higher version of the same product (Schmitz et al., 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The following subsection addresses the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. The study contained assumptions that I believed to be true but had no means to substantiate with evidence, while limitations contained weaknesses of the study. Delimitations address the limitations of the study scope. The subsection begins with Assumptions.

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts that I assume to be true, but I am unable to verify. Assumptions are made because researchers have little control in verifying the facts

(Martin & Parmar, 2012). Addressing assumptions is critical to avoid misrepresentation of data (Parker, 2014).

I assumed that the participants selected for the study would respond with honesty. Further, I assumed that the respondents in the focus group discussion were honest in their opinions and not biased by their peers or superiors' opinions. I also assumed that the artifacts shown as supporting evidence were authentic and actioned given the intention.

Limitations

Limitations are the weaknesses of the study that challenge the process of analysis (Brutus, Gill, & Duniewicz, 2010). The primary limitation of the study was the inability to obtain financial documents of the respondents because of Dubai cultural taboos. The absence of financial statistics to verify the impact of strategic decisions became a major limitation of the study. Further, the study was limited by time and scope. The time limitation translates into limitations regarding sample size, while the scope limitation translates to geographic limitations, which in this case study confined to the city of Dubai in the UAE.

Delimitations

The delimitations define the boundaries in terms of the study scope (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010). Through the proposed study, I intended to understand the strategies of organizations and not the outcome of the actions. In view of delimitations, I intended to capture the qualitative elements of processes and validate them through a qualitative methodological triangulation process. Analyzing and quantifying financial measurements and documents to validate the performances fall outside the scope of the study. The study primarily relied on respondents' feedback and not on documented evidence.

Significance of the Study

Business managers are responsible for increasing shareholder value through generating profits from business activities (Neumann, 2013). For example, Chinese business leaders changing their market positioning is evidence of a management strategic response to environmental change (Pollman, 2012). This study may be a reference for business managers of Dubai in developing sustainable strategies to counter operational challenges that affect business profitability.

Contribution to Business Practice

Many business managers may consider goal setting as a strategy or create a strategy regarding platforms of their own interpreted logics (Rumelt, 2011). In situations of strategy considered to a goal setting process or used as an interpretation of own logics, the process is misleading, and thereby, many of these strategies reach the end of life ineffectively (Rumelt, 2011). Understanding some of the successful implementations in the same operating environment may eliminate the need for trial and error processes and provide a platform for utilizing resources effectively.

Implications for Social Change

In this study, I provide a platform for business managers to consider alternative options regarding managing their businesses profitably while compensating employees towards mitigating rising costs of living. A business strategy that satisfies shareholders and the employees may empower business managers to sustain organizational profitability while minimizing the impact on employee living standards that may be caused by inflation (Shishu & Hae-Ou, 2013). Further, the findings may provide insights for business managers to sustain business growth by which organizations may be able to retain the current workforce with adequate remunerations, while also providing additional employment opportunities. This could affect social change by providing more employment opportunities in challenging business environments.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this literature review was to understand the existing knowledge of organizational strategies used in managing profitability in an environment of escalating operating costs. The review of literature supported the understanding of the conceptual framework and established a bibliographic source pertaining to the topic. Through this literature review, I discussed the conceptual framework of the study, the existing body of knowledge regarding the research topic, and how the conceptual framework applied to the existing body of knowledge and study results.

I obtained the literature for the study through the platform of the Walden University online library. The study contained 204 articles out which 94% of the articles were peer-reviewed and 87% of the articles published within the past 5 years of completing this study (2012-2016). The literature review subsection contained 111 peer-reviewed scholarly articles of which 91% published within the past 5 years (2012-2016).

Multiple databases included Thoreau, ProQuest Central, and Science Direct. I also searched UAE government databases and Google Scholar for relevant studies. The keywords used for searching articles in these databases included combinations of *business cost management, business strategy, inflation and profitability, business operations, sustaining profitability, revenue and strategy,* and *managing cost-effective teams.*

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies the business leaders in Dubai use for maintaining profitability in an environment of rising operational costs. Strategic management had its intellectual roots from the 1960s (Marx, 2013). Strategy and management have a coherent relationship to the strategic planning and decisions were interrelated to management practice (Marx, 2013). The Boston Consulting Group in 1963 developed tools, concepts, and techniques for formulating strategies, while Michel Porter developed an economist structure-conduct-performance (CPC) framework based on Edward Mason and Joe Brain (Marx, 2013). Kaplan and Norton (1992) developed the BSC based on the importance of measuring business performance from multiple perspectives.

Balanced Scorecard

Balanced scorecard (BSC) is a strategic approach to performance management systems that assists managers with translating their strategies into the organizational vision and uses four perspectives (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). Business manager’s use the formwork of BSC as a tool for continuously improve strategic performance measurements through a feedback system of internal business processes coupled with external outcomes (Dubey, 2013). Kaplan and Norton (1992) addressed the implementation of vision and strategy from financial, internal business processes, customer, and learning and growing perspectives. The four performance measuring elements align with stakeholder objectives, customer objectives, internal efficiencies objectives, and value creation and learning objectives (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). Leaders and managers who use BSC focus on strategy and vision over control of financial indicators (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). Further, business managers use the BSC to drive the vision of managers and employees through establishing measurable goals and working relationships; thus, they can move the organization forward (Kaplan & Norton, 1992).

Balanced scorecard is a framework grounded in the concept of cause and effect and, therefore, can be effective in defining strategic objectives and measuring outcomes of defined performance drivers (Dubey, 2013). The financial objectives of BSC include strategic implementation and execution that then translates to increased profitability, growth, and shareholder value (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). The customer objectives of BSC address customer interest regarding time, quality, service, and cost that translates to revenue growth (Kaplan & Norton, 1992).

Internal efficiency objectives include reaching excellence through critical internal processes and competencies of the organization that align with serving customer needs (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). Innovation and learning objectives are parameters that are critical for competitive success (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). Thus, organizations are able to develop new products, create additional value for customers, and improve operating efficiencies to drive competitiveness that translates into revenue and margin growth (Kaplan & Norton, 1992).

Dubey (2013) used the BSC in the case study of nanotechnology implementation, while BSC positively influenced the alignment of management action with broad organizational objectives in a private bank in England (Seal & Ye, 2014). The strategies of Bernard, Drucker, and Ansoff emphasized the critical role of leadership in formulating and implementing strategy (Marx, 2013), while Boston Consulting Group argued the importance of objective analysis of industry sectors and developed growth-share matrix focused on market positions and cost of production (Marx, 2013). The BSC provided the framework for internal efficiency and competitiveness that facilitated management control discourse in specific situations (Seal & Ye, 2014). The BSC framework aligns well with the research objectives.

Strategies for Sustaining Profitability

Organizations consider cost reduction or revenue growth as broader measures in sustaining profitability (Rust, Moorman, & Dickson, 2002). Enhancing the internal efficiencies through reducing the inputs plays a major role in cost reduction strategies while customer focused and market-oriented strategies enhance revenue for the organizations (Rust et al., 2002). Parnell, Lester, Long, and Koseoglu (2012) reviewed the literature on cost reduction strategies and revenue enhancing strategies and examined the role of perceived environmental uncertainty of small and medium enterprise's (SME).

In this study, Parnell et al. found cost, differentiation, and focus based strategic approaches were common in China, Turkey, and the USA, though the coherent approaches of markets differed.

Strategic intent determines the way an organization approaches business decisions and competitors, as strategic intent has a direct effect on an organization's performance (Mariadoss, Johnson, & Martin, 2014). Further, Kaplan and Norton (1992) argued that financial performance of the organization is a consequence of operational actions. The financial objectives of BSC are achieved by increasing revenue and profitability through attaining customer objectives and internal process objectives, while cost efficacies and profitability are reached through innovation and learning objectives (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). The literature review included research studies and literature reviews that focused on cost saving initiatives on operational costs, cost saving initiatives on cost of goods and service provided, and revenue growth initiatives as means to sustain profitability.

Operating Cost and Business Profitability

Price flexibility and stickiness had an effect on profitability in the U.S., and inflation statistics (Gwin & VanHoose, 2012). Inflation has an influence on the increase of price dispersion and reduces market power by driving the mark-ups lower (Gwin & VanHoose, 2012). Mark-ups are positive in markets in which wage and prices were flexible but showed negative relations toward mark-ups in which, the price and wage are sticky (Gwin & VanHoose, 2012). Moreover, inflation negatively affects the mean growth rate through the debt to equity, sales to assets, and profitability ratios (N'cho-Oguie et al., 2011).

Managers of organizations should recognize their ability to offset the negative impact of inflation with growth-enhancing strategies (N'cho-Oguie et al., 2011). Furthermore, higher per capita GDP growth rates and lower inflation rates are productive for bank profitability in healthy macroeconomic environments (Vu & Nahm, 2013). Thus, healthy microeconomic environment and growth strategies of organizations showed signs of countering negative effects of inflation to support the organizational profitability (Vu & Nahm, 2013).

Characteristics of corporate life influenced the consequence of practiced frugality of organizations (Anderson & Lillis, 2011). Organizations control and manage the capital, labor, and material costs (Anderson & Lillis, 2011). The frugality is distinct from organizational culture, business strategy, and budget culture (Anderson & Lillis, 2011). In this processes, managers of organizations strategize the activities through value-adding processes, trade-off low-cost and low price, branding, quality, and customer service (Anderson & Lillis, 2011). Frugality practiced organizations considered overtime and temporary seasonal staff to flex their higher level of output over recruiting staff on permanent payrolls while placing higher importance for technology that offered efficiencies and quality improvement initiatives in managing capital expenditure (Anderson & Lillis, 2011).

Further, frugal organizations managed material and supply costs through centralized procurement, bulk purchasing, competitive bidding processes, just-in-time inventory, and lean production processes to attain lowest possible prices from suppliers as means to increase efficiency in procurement and inventory management (Anderson & Lillis, 2011). Frugal companies used internal improvement tools such as target setting, waste reduction, continuous improvement, productivity enhancement programs, risk management, automation of lean accounting, and environmental accounting for cost management, and considered value chain analysis, divesting unprofitable business portfolios or products, and performance-based pay, as management tools for managing the cost (Anderson & Lillis, 2011).

Inflation impact on businesses. The dynamic threshold model of estimating inflation threshold considers situations of inflation as being a distorting factor and a fostering factor for economic growth (Kremer, Bick, & Nautz, 2013). Using the 5 year data from international financial statistics, Penn world table, and World Trade Organization of 124 industrial and developing countries across the world, Kremer et al. (2013), outlined the threshold inflation rates as 2% for industrialized nations and 17% for nonindustrialized nations.

Significant lower economic growth correlated when the inflation exceeded the threshold level, while inflation below these levels failed to demonstrate any significant long-term economic growth (Kremer et al., 2013). The leaders practicing inflation target rates were better off in managing country’s economic performance than the countries did not practice this policy during the pre- and post-economic crisis (Oztruk, Sozdemir, & Ulger, 2014). Furthermore, the leaders of developed and developing nations practicing target inflation rate policy were able to keep the rate of inflation lower than the countries that did not practice this policy during these periods (Oztruk et al., 2014).

Protecting the revenue growth and sustaining profitability for low-cost restaurants during inflation has been a challenge and, therefore, in an inflationary economy, restaurant owners were compelled to either increase the food price or compromise the profits by absorbing the increasing costs by themselves (Munjal & Sharma, 2012). In situations of a possible price increase, business managers opt for the gradual increase of price over a longer period and used the media propaganda on inflation as the factor for justifications (Munjal & Sharma, 2012). In situations in which the price increase was not feasible, organizations consider innovative processes to minimize the impact of increasing costs to the business (Munjal & Sharma, 2012). In the study of Munjal and Sharma (2012), restaurant owners considered innovation through menu reengineering, offering buffets to flatten the cost, improved yield management to reduce waste, new recipes to reuse the raw materials where relevant, used alternate ingredients, staff training, and promoting multitasking as means to reduce the increasing costs. In the healthcare industry, when the cost of services increases more rapidly than the economic and inflation rates, organizations considered strategies of transferring risks to third parties as a means to protect the profitability (Nunez & Kleiner, 2012). Healthcare providers used the insurance providers, preferred provider organizations, healthcare cost coalitions, prudent buyer systems, health promotion and wellness programs, and provider-sponsored organizations as means and tools to transfer the risk of financial losses (Nunez & Kleiner, 2012).

Impact of labor cost on businesses. Microeconomic environmental variables challenge business sustainability (Michel & Wiid, 2013). For example, the inflation, interest rates, crime rate and unemployment, demand, pricing, and location specifics variables lead the causes for small and medium enterprise failure in South Africa (Michel & Wiid, 2013). In mitigating the financial impact of raising labor costs, organizations consider innovative options (Manuj, Omar, & Yazdanparast, 2013).

In the context of Chinese wages rising more rapidly than labor productivity, Chinese labor-intense manufacturing sectors considered relocating their production units out of China (Li, Li, Wu, & Xiong, 2012). The original equipment manufacturers (OEM) in China were struggling to meet their clients' continued demands for lower prices and strict delivery deadlines because of increasing labor costs (Carter & Findley, 2012).

Having good employees increases the organizational competitiveness (Khanna, Jones, & Boive, 2014). Employees think positively on new business ideas when the business environments allow implementation of such ideas (Wu, Parker, & De Jong, 2014). Organizations consider human capital and social capital as strategic importance for organizational performance (Nyberg, Moliterno, Hale, & Lepak, 2014).

The rare earth metal importers (REM) of U.S confronted the challenge of financial instability due to unpredictable production cost and limited raw material availability

(Watson, 2013). The supply chain is a critical element for organizations competitiveness when the products are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substantial (Ellram, Tate, & Feitzinger, 2013). Given sustaining competitiveness, organizations can improve market conditions by setting up logical points of supply chain for manufacturing, raw material supply, and distribution (Ellram et al., 2013).

Further, in view of countering unforeseen external or internal changes, it is critical for organizations to develop strategic contingency plans for altering the supply chain for sustaining organizational performance (Ellram et al., 2013). Managing the process to improve the productivity of the resources, finding alternative means of resources supply, and relocation of business to lower labor pools were found as possible effective means to mitigate the cost of labor and product shortage (Bell Mollenkopf & Stolze, 2013; Ellram et al., 2013).

Accounting techniques. Accounting techniques are valuable tools for organizations to measure their cost structures and performance, in defining and designing strategies, to become competitive and profitable (Alsoboa & Aldehayyat, 2013). Organizations use activity based costing (ABC) technique to understand the cost structures and profitability of products and services, while use target costing (TC) technique in determining improvements to the internal cost structure (Alsoboa & Aldehayyat, 2013). Activity based management (ABM) techniques facilitate opportunities to change activities and processes of the organizations, and business process reengineering (BPR) facilitates the performance enhancements initiatives when organizations consider a radical change to the organization and or its departments (Alsoboa & Aldehayyat, 2013).

The benchmarking techniques facilitate in identifying the best practices to reduce cost and enhance efficiencies (Alsoboa & Aldehayyat, 2013). ABC, BPR, and benchmarking techniques were effective in facilitating cost leadership strategy of the organizations, while ABC, TC, and ABM were effective in differentiation strategy implementation (Alsoboa & Aldehayyat, 2013). Focus strategy implementation demonstrated an orientation towards ABM technique (Alsoboa & Aldehayyat, 2013).

Cost Reduction Strategies

Organizations consider various options in reducing their business costs to compete nationally and internationally (Kruger, 2012). Attaining higher improvements in cost reduction through, quality, dependability, and low cost are considered as the most important competitive operational priorities for national and international operations while organizations use their knowledge as the basis for building quality products on dependable low costs to enhance their operational capabilities (Kruger, 2012). In a changing environment driven by government reform programs, financial institution found prevention and reduction in nonperforming loans, hiring skilled and qualified employees, investing in information technologies, and developing wide range of nontraditional products to be effective in shaping the organization’s character towards profitability (Vu & Nahm, 2013).

Due to challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled staff against the pressure from government funding in non-profit organization (NPO) environment, NPO's opted for shared service to ease the cost pressure, as a means to do more with fewer funds (Crump & Peter, 2014). Though there were no clear lines between international business strategies and multinational corporations general business strategies, strategic choices had implications for employment and working conditions (Drahokoupil, 2014).

An actor-based perspective is important over resource-based perspectives in addressing important issues in international business strategies (Drahokoupil, 2014). Further, from the worker's perspectives, the scope of strategic business decisions are directed at resolving market positioning, funding, managing systems and human resources elements to categorize and define prompting actions towards restructuring, outsourcing and relocating, downsizing, and bankruptcy (Drahokoupil, 2014). Organizations consider various cost reduction options as strategies to sustain profitability (Rust et al., 2002).

Working capital management. Organizations should look at measures of controlling costs against the practice of cutting costs, as cost cutting can be dysfunctional for sustaining long terms performance for organizations (Guni, 2014). Organizations explore extreme management measures to enhance effectiveness by integrating cost reduction propositions through an objective driven defense and attack strategies (Guni, 2014). Working capital and corporate performance has an inverted U-shape relationship (Banos-Caballero, Garcia-Teruel, & Martinez-Solano, 2014). Managing the working capital becomes essential for organizations, as working capital are beneficial to an extent of increasing sales and obtaining early payment discounts, while demonstrating an adverse effect at the point where working capital becomes liable for additional interest payments against borrowings (Banos-Caballero et al., 2014). Further, organizations should have effective systems to monitor cash flow and profitability to focus on controlling costs (Guni, 2014).

Cash flow management and cultivating business relationships are means for better working capital management that have a direct influence on organizational profitability (Guni, 2014). Similarly, the role of the business cycle in organizations has a direct relationship to working capital and profitability, specifically in the areas of current asset, current liabilities, and its relationship to the corporate performance (Enqvist, Graham, & Nikkinen, 2014). The cash conversation cycle in terms of inventory levels, receivables turnover, and payable turnover has an impact on the working capital management of organizations in an environment of higher sales revenue and diversified product portfolio (Dorisz, 2014).

In a study to explore organizations' performance during the recessions, Dorisz (2014) conducted research using Hungarian dairy companies and their financial statements for the period 2009-2012. Dorisz found organizations reduced the cash conversion cycle by condensing inventory and receivables turnover and moved towards internal source of funding. This change in policies optimized the production processes, creditors, and debtor management process, and thus facilitating the organizations to become profitable (Dorisz, 2014). Managing the working capital by increasing the efficiency in inventory management, reducing the accounts receivable time, and increasing the accounts payable times were effective in increasing profitability for the organizations (Enqvist et al., 2014).

Managing the business-to-business (B2B) buy-side e-commerce of organizations is important in managing the profitability from the perspective of measuring return on organization's assets (Efendi, Kinney, Smith, & Smith, 2013). B2B buy-side in organization's business processes improves purchasing and transaction costs and is instrumental in reducing the sales and general administration costs (Efendi et al., 2013). Efendi et al. (2013) in their study found that return on asset (ROA) of B2B buy-side adopted organizations outperformed the non-adopted organizations due to higher profit margins. In addition, Efendi et al. revealed that smaller firms gain greater benefits from B2B buy-side adoption than from large firms due their ability to penetrate into larger organizations.

Organizations consider process optimizations as a means of reducing costs, as customers and product portfolio misalignments lead to: (a) non-exploitation of market potentials, (b) ineffective organizing of resources and production capabilities to the market requirements, (c) under-exploitation and maladaptation of distribution channels and marketing policies, and (d) lack of communication synchronization between supply, production, sales and accounting (Guni, 2014). Organizational leadership must reorganize the inefficient units, consider stringent investment planning, introduce efficient cost management measures, and emphasize that managers build a sustainable cost reduction strategy by building organizations with a culture of reducing waste (Guni, 2014).

Lease price adjustment is an option considered by organizations to control cost while double-sided lease price adjustments were effective in managing revenue, and controlling costs in volatile markets (Al Sharif & Qin, 2015). In double-sided lease price adjustments contracts, the lessor and lessee had the flexibility of adjusting the lease prices periodically to suit the defined market conditions and indexes, and, therefore, double-sided flexible lease contracts were effective in managing risk against fixed rate contracts and more useful than considering the options of financial derivatives (Al Sharif & Qin, 2015).

Global markets. International outsourcing is another option an organizational leader considers to reduce business costs, improve competitiveness, improve access to scarce and distinct resources, and reduce other costs (Ok, 2011). Production cost has been one of the primary decision components in international business, as many underdeveloped countries become the prime candidates for outsourcing due to their lower labor costs (Nguyen & Lee, 2008). Manjuntha and Bheemanagouda (2013) suggested that transport cost is the fundamental element in business costs. The authors argued that factor endowment theory ignored the impact of transport cost to the overall production cost, though a higher transportation cost would nullify the factor endowed production cost advantages. Organizations strategically develop core competencies in logistics to become leaders (Peko & Ahmed, 2011).

Logistics provide a unique competitive advantage through tangible and intangible resources and synergize competence that drives a low-cost logistics differentiation approach for higher levels of service and customer satisfaction (Peko & Ahmed, 2011). A centralized logistics function is supported by integrated information system, integration of internal and external supply chains, and the ability to respond swiftly, and adapt to changing operating environments are key capabilities of organizations adopting low-cost logistics approach as one strategy for success (Peko & Ahmed, 2011). Attaining such differentiated position facilitates access to wider markets (Peko & Ahmed, 2011).

Given reducing costs, an inter-organizational cost management (ICM) process focuses on minimizing costs, and creating competitive advantage through maintaining flexibility and adaptability in the inter-organizational network that enables new strategic market view positions to provide a platform for sharing, and collaborating information within supply chain members (de Faria, Soares, Rocha, & Bedinelli Rossi, 2013). The practice of ICM has become an important element in the strategic management of an organization, as ICM facilitates relationships between the assembly plants and suppliers more profitably (de Faria et al., 2013). Managing the supply chain of an organization is crucial for achieving competitiveness as well as maximizing profits for organizations (Ellram et al., 2013).

Supply chain management. Supply chain management improvement programs influence the performance measures of organizations (Caniato, Golini, & Kalchschmidt, 2013). Though supply chain considers current moving averages and minimum order quantities (MOQ) based forecasting, an algorithmic approach based on a supply process has proven effective (Baker, Jayaraman, & Ashley, 2013). In a study of defining a cost-effective cash supply process to a bank automated teller machine (ATM), Baker et al. (2013) found that abolishing the current moving average and minimum order quantity (MOQ) based cash supply process with a data-driven algorithmic approach earned a reduction of 4.6% in overall cost of operation. Organizations consider centralized facilities over decentralized facilities (Kumar & Blair, 2013).

Centralized management process limits deviations of practices across facilities, thus reduce the deviation from standards, and practice (Kumar & Blair, 2013). Centralized standardized processes allow organizations to form strategic alliances with vendors for optimizing the supply chain and cost of goods (Kumar & Blair, 2013). A centralized supply chain can optimize cost in every process of the operation (Kumar & Blair, 2013); however, centralized supply chains are superior in cost performance and decentralized supply chains are effective in time performance (Chiu & Kremer, 2014). Organizational leaders address challenges associated with maintaining traditional competitiveness on cost, product differentiation, and lead-time as these are easily replicated by the competition (Manuj et al., 2013). Organizations are compelled to innovate with capabilities that are difficult to imitate (Manuj et al., 2013).

Inter-organizational learning was one such capability that provided a competitive advantage in a supply chain and logistics domain (Manuj et al., 2013). Organizations are compelled to adapt inter-organizational learning as a response to changes in the operating environment (Manuj et al., 2013). Similarly, in a study viewed through competitive advantages, the researchers found collaboration, coordination, and integration as processes towards leveraging the flexibilities of global suppliers had positive effects on organizations performance (Omar, Davis-Sramek, Myers, & Mentzer 2012).

In an environment of varying business demands, product price takes dominance over transportation cost, while quality assessments attach higher importance over technical capabilities and business improvement (Koc & Burhan, 2014). Availability followed by cost and quality are considered as important elements in environments of varying business demands that challenges organizational processes to select the best supplier who can then align customer needs in a competitive and timely manner (Koc & Burhan, 2014). A dynamic business environment challenges organizational leaders to select suppliers who can assure stock availability, competitive prices, and quality products (Koc & Burhan, 2014).

Effective supply chain strategies are critical for organizational success as supply chain management facilitates the processes of cost reduction, quality improvement, and implementation of effective supply chain strategies as the key to organizational success (Kumar, Singh, & Shankar, 2013). Further, the on-time delivery, innovation, flexible manufacturing systems, location of suppliers, and customers are critical elements in defining a supply chain strategy (Kumar et al., 2013).

Organizations must consider fluctuating prices, challenges in sharing sensitive information, possible transportation delays, changing global demands, and seasonality elements as the main risks for an organizational supply chain (Kumar et al., 2013). An integrated inventory management model is effective, too, in operations and pricing decisions of organizations (Rad, Khoshalhan, & Glock, 2014). Utilizing an integrated inventory model with unit backorder cost and a low mean rate of defects resulted in short-supply models that performed better especially when demand was highly price sensitive (Rad et al., 2014). Further, the integrated inventory model significantly improved the channel profitability coordination between buyer and supply, and organizations beneficiated when the price sensitivity was high (Rad et al., 2014).

Responsive supply chain allows organizations to realign to the external conditions (Roh, Hong, & Min, 2014). Multi-dimensional integration with customer information forms an adaptive supply chain that is capable of responding to dynamic external demands (Roh et al., 2014). Close loop supply chain process addresses the resource supply shortage (Bell et al., 2013). Virtual dual sourcing actively identifies and assesses the weak points within a supply chain, and maintains alternate resources for access in disaster situations (Fujimoto & Park, 2014).

Closed loop supply chain management facilitates organization to recover, reuse, or repurpose waste materials and packaging materials within the manufacturing process

(Bell et al., 2013). With alternative and innovative supply chain practices, the process of recycling a reverse supply chain has become effective in enhancing profitability for participants (Govindan & Popiuc, 2014). In a study focused on recycling end-of-life personal computers through a revenue sharing model along the supply chain, Govindan and Popiuc (2014) found organizational profitability improved four times more than reverse supply chain coordination.

Standardizations and business process reengineering. Standardizations were the other options organizations considered for operational cost reductions (Diaconu, 2012). In an attempt to analyze the development and operations of low-cost airlines, Diaconu (2012) found that Southwest Airlines considered the close relationship between travel demand and an economic cycle as the driving factors for low-cost airlines. The airline considered cutting aircraft and employee costs through standardization and higher resource use as their primary drivers for managing costs. Based on these strategies, the airline was able to maintain a higher equity ratio of price-quality and efficient resource management to achieve higher quality with lower cost (Diaconu, 2012).

Further, the implementation of coordinated processes within the company had increased the efficiency-quality relationship, which contributed towards maintaining a lower tariff for the airline (Diaconu, 2012). In addition, Walmart's business decision to implement waste management, recycling, focusing on energy efficient stores, adopting new transportation technology, and packaging efficiencies, facilitated the drive towards sustaining cost leadership principals (Stankeviciute, Grunda, & Bartkus, 2012).

Reengineering of business processes provided quality improvement opportunities for cost reduction (Nwabueze, 2012). In an attempt to demonstrate ways to improve manufacturing process through total quality management (TQM), Nwabueze (2012) found that reduction in process time was more effective than taking a measure for cutting costs. Further, the Nwabueze recommended that stabilizing the process is the first step before engaging in process reengineering, and a clearly defined value proposition was the guide for the reengineering process. Management of productive labor hours is critical for businesses as process and workflow related constraints consume large portions of non-productive labor hours (Das, 2012). Redesigning work process flows and using appropriate gears and equipment as a solution to increase the networking time of labor is critical in reducing operational costs, with labor being the dominant cost component for an industry (Das, 2012). Managing the opposing forces of employee expectation and operational costs, an internal audit is effective in improving organizational business processes related to compensation and benefits (Berber, Pasula, Radosevic, Ikonov, & Vugdelija, 2012). Internal audits provide insights and recommendations that minimize the risks in a human resource compensation process (Berber et al., 2012).

Lean six sigma has an impact on organizational internal and external financial performance (Jayaraman, Kee, & Soh, 2012). Organizational leaders implementing lean six sigma were able to realize operational performance enhancements from waste reductions, improved quality of products, flexibility, delivery performance, and productivity (Jayaraman et al., 2012). Business processes reengineering (BPR) has a significant influence on organizational financial and operational performances (Bhasin & Parrey, 2013). In a study conducted on J&K bank with an analytical approach to BPR that strived to induce radical changes than incremental changes to the processes, Bhasin and Parrey (2013) through a review of the relevant literature confirmed that J&K Bank achieved significant performances in terms cost, quality, and speed through the implementation of BPR. Further, they found that BPR and organizational performances had a linear relationship and a strong correlation (Bhasin & Parrey, 2013).

Revenue Enhancement Strategies

Escalating business costs challenge the cost leadership strategies of Chinese manufacturers (Wong & Tong, 2012). Many organizations in China are reconsidering their investment towards research and development in view of developing new products (Wong & Tong, 2012). Business excellence, business innovations, and human resource management (HRM) support higher productivity and growth opportunities in shrinking markets (Soliman, 2012). Business excellence and innovation strive to enhance the financial performance of organizations, whereas business excellence focused on measures towards implementing quality improvement process. Business innovation focused on creating new products and markets (Soliman, 2012).

Further, business innovation compasses a larger role than business excellence as business innovation focuses on driving improvements in the internal and external environment through political, economic, competitive, and operational risks (Soliman, 2012). To drive business innovations, the organizational leaders reach beyond their core capabilities and industry structure (Soliman, 2012). Organizational leaders develop views beyond the traditional means of performances to evolve within the business environment (Soliman, 2012).

Organizations considered the options of generating more revenue and increasing capacity against cutting costs or consider external consolidations as a strategic direction to address the challenges (Issel, Olorunsaiye, Snebold, & Handler, 2015). In such situations, organizations with strong structural capacity perform positively as the structural capacity facilitated the enhancement of essential organizational services by initiating financial strategies and active engagements regarding collaborations (Issel et al., 2015).

Customer relationship. Organizations consider treating customers according to their profitability and, thus, customer-focused structure was required to link performance gains to customer equity and faithfulness (Johnson, Clark, & Barczak, 2012). Business-to-business firms focused on maintaining and acquiring profitable customers through initiations and maintenance of a customer relations management process; conversely, customers are terminated through an implicit process of reducing relationship investments while raising costs to customers (Johnson et al., 2012).

Further, organizations deploy resource yield management as a measure to allocate desired resources, meanwhile developing strategies for customer retention and abandoning unprofitable programs while selecting profitable customers (Suleyman & Ilker, 2013). Customers look for value while customer satisfaction brings in additional loyalty that facilitates the successful sales process towards enhancing the revenue and the profitability of organizations (Blocker, Cannon, Panagopoulos, & Sager, 2012). Customer relationship management and supply chain management have closer links and compose a critical element in sustaining competitiveness and profitability as supply chain efficiency enhances the customer experience (Acharyulu, 2012). Supply chain management is critical for organizations in defining and designing customer relations management strategies that drive organizational profitability (Acharyulu, 2012).

Salespersons are an important resource for the organization as salespersons increase revenue through a process of creating value to customers (Blocker et al., 2012). Creation and appropriation of value are critical for organizational business strategies as customers are inclined to demonstrate loyalty to suppliers and delivering higher value propositions (Blocker et al., 2012). Salespeople create value when they are attuned and able to coordinate with customer needs (Blocker et al., 2012). Salespeople develop, track, anticipate, and adapt customer values and encounter a relational process with partnership ties to create value for customers (Blocker et al., 2012).

Salespeople use cross-selling and up-selling programs as a means to increase revenue for the organization (Johnson & Friend, 2015). Through cross-selling and up-selling, productive programs, and organizations use them as strategies to increase revenue; the success of the program depends on the level of motivation, opportunity, and ability of the salespersons (Johnson & Friend, 2015). Though cross-selling and up-selling are unique strategies that are underpinned with different philosophical propositions of sales professional's attitudes and behaviors, higher customer orientation contributes positively to salesperson performances and satisfaction (Johnson & Friend, 2015). Further, sales managers need to derive strategies from a transactional perspective to drive the sales force with the right mindset, skills, and behavioral tendencies as a salesperson's cross-selling and up-selling motives are driven by conditional factors and not driven intrinsically (Johnson & Friend, 2015).

Changing value propositions. Customer profitability is important for organizational success as organizations incur costs by creating value for the customer, while customers consume organizational value through product, customer service, and asset opportunity costs (Suleyman & Ilker, 2013). The customer-centric costing process is effective for organizational resource use (Suleyman & Ilker, 2013). Organizations deploying an accounting framework such as activity based costing techniques for ascertaining the profitability for each customer are able to measure customer profitability effectively (Suleyman & Ilker, 2013).

Organizations continuously strive to develop strategies to manage business competitiveness and profitability by competing for a client's significant needs rather than price; competing against low cost producers across the world via low price is not sustainable for profitability (Jasinavicius & Jasinavicius, 2011). Organizations will consider taking a geographical proximity advantage to configuring the supply chain to small batch production and the quick replenishment of merchandise directly to retailers as a means of reducing inventory holding cost (Jasinavicius & Jasinavicius, 2011).

Effective strategies regarding sales to target markets have increased four times while profitability increased five times (Jasinavicius & Jasinavicius, 2011). Revenue sharing models in supply chains are effective as revenue sharing contracts yield higher profits across the supply chain (Omkar & Palsule-Desai, 2013). The yield in higher profits was realized based on higher ownership and involvement of supply chain owners, while supply chains were perfectly coordinated in either situation of revenue dependent on sharing and revenue independent sharing contracts (Omkar & Palsule-Desai, 2013). Further, revenue dependent revenue sharing supply chains were able to distinguish the high and low revenue areas, and thereby, were able to coordinate resources toward maximizing efficiencies (Omkar & Palsule-Desai, 2013). Strategic alliances with suppliers contribute toward mitigating business challenges that improve organization profitability (Cordova, Duran, Sepulveda, Fernandez, & Rojas, 2012).

In challenging environments of price escalation, supply shortages, and deteriorating service levels, organizations developing long-term strategic alliances based on mutual benefits, trusted relationships, common directions, and values are key drivers for overcoming suppliers, supply challenges of businesses cost effectiveness, and profitability (Cordova et al., 2012). Organizations striving to differentiate themselves from their competitors to lower cost, increase revenue, and increase profits found identifying market conditions, anticipating future developments, and aligning the key business components with market conditions and anticipated future development to be the key factors for success (Wagner, Jonke, & Eisingerich, 2012).

Market conditions are identified by product characteristics, maintenance strategy of customers, and post sales obligation, while future developments are driven by primary product life cycles and forecasting methods (Wagner et al., 2012). Further, organizational alignment of business goals, supply option, and inventory options form as tools that enable the success of penetrating defined markets and sustaining them in the future (Wagner et al., 2012). Organizations consider upstream planning in the supply chain as a win-win strategic advantage within supply chains to be effective (Taghipour & Frayret, 2013). Organizations consider operation planning, management of manufacturing, and logistics via synchronizing the resource utilizations to minimize the inefficiencies in terms of inventory, thus having a positive influence on organizational revenue streams (Taghipour & Frayret, 2013).

Pricing strategies. In dynamics of pricing strategies, channel efficiency is positive when an equilibrium pricing policy of forward-looking retailer is consistent and manufacturers commit to a wholesale pricing on an open-loop price structure (Xu, Chiang, & Liang, 2011). Open-loop pricing strategy is an advantage for the manufacturer and the retailer through higher cost learning effects (Xu et al., 2011). The channels show less efficiency in contract with a static pricing strategy, while some have observed as a reverse effect on feedback pricing strategy (Xu et al., 2011). In committed fixed costs situations, full cost methods are effective in calculating the prices when the capacity is estimated or committed while marginal cost pricing is useful is situations of managing additional demand or updated demand information (Hsu & Lee, 2012). In the airline industry, where the cost is committed for a flight, airlines use full cost-based pricing when setting initial prices and use marginal cost based pricing when setting short-term prices (Hsu & Lee, 2012).

In the retail industry, dominant organizations like Wal-Mart create a significant impact on cost and price strategies of downstream retailers, forcing them to consider alternative cost and price repositioning strategies to respond to the entry of major supermarkets in their territories (Ellickson, Misra, & Nair, 2012). Retailers consider long-term consequences, the requirement of significant sunk investments, and dynamic pricing as salient features of repositioning decisions (Ellickson et al., 2012). Based on these repositioning decisions, supermarkets and retailers use revenue, price, and sales data to articulate cost benefits to defining everyday low price strategies and promotional pricing strategies (Ellickson et al., 2012). Organizations consider product market power and activity based management actions in meeting the defined earnings forecasts to boost sales revenue, reduce production costs, and cut-back on discretionary expenditure as a means to sustain or enhance the real earnings (Mitra, Hossain, & Jain, 2013).

Organizations having greater product market power with the ability to differentiate products for additional revenue earnings were less inclined towards activity based learning management in uncertain environments compared to organizations with less market power (Mitra et al., 2013). In an application-purchasing support environment where dominance and risk averseness of partners and providers are high, organizations base pricing strategies on revenue sharing, optimal application purchasing support strategies, and incentive compatible efforts and are viable mediums for sustaining competitiveness and profitability (Unno & Hua, 2013). Priority schemes and differentiated pricing strategies are effective in a service environment where discriminatory pricing structure is viable to maximize revenue (Zhou, Chao, & Gong, 2014). In a fixed price environment where optimal pricing is prevalent, organizations use the queuing system with two class pricing policy to maximize revenue (Zhou et al., 2014). Further, the pricing structure has the ability to vary two classes of customers based on different system parameters to enhance the revenue and profitability (Zhou et al., 2014). The potential market structure plays a role in defining an optimal pricing structure (Zhou et al., 2014).

In channel strategy and price competition of direct and e-tailing environments, organizations consider channel structures, revenue sharing pricing strategies, and their effect on channel-wide profitability (Jen-Ming & Chun-Yun, 2013). Organizational channel strategies consist of: (a) non-corporate decentralized channel strategy where a market leader moves first and sets the revenue sharing norms independent of any competing channels, (b) vertically intergraded channels where optimal retail and e-tailing prices were chosen, (c) partially intergraded channels where the manufacturer integrates the Internet channel to compete with the retailers, and (d) cooperative decentralization where total system-wide profits were determined separately by channel members (Jen-Ming, & Chun-Yun, 2013).

Implementing these strategies, organizations find channel-wide profits to be inefficient in a non-corporate decentralized channel strategy as the degree of profits decline when the price elasticity and product differentiations increase, while the channel-wide profitability was more effective with vertically intergraded channels than partially intergraded channels and cooperative decentralized channels (Jen-Ming & Chun-Yun, 2013). Further, Internet profits were better when the degree of product differentiation and price elasticity were lower, while manufacturers gain higher profits by integrating internet retailing through channel wide performances (Jen-Ming & Chun-Yun, 2013).

Changing market and product position. Changing the existing market positioning is another option an organizational leader uses as a strategy to move away from competing on price (Pollmann, 2012). China is a low-cost production nation with initiatives and investments towards transforming to a high-tech nation of world power (Pollmann, 2012). In an attempt to evaluate the actions, China took in using its resources to changes market positions for the long-term economic growth. Pollmann (2012) found China made positive inroads toward education, international affiliation, and research and development as part of their strategy for changing their position from a low cost nation to a high-tech nation. Further, in support of the repositioning strategy, China established itself as a nation with the highest percentage of science and engineering graduates in the world and ranked high as a nation investing in research and development activities (Pollmann, 2012).

Organizations respond with new growth platforms driven by new market opportunities (Alimpic, 2013). In an environment of increasing costs and decreasing revenue due to regulatory implications, the coherent understanding of differentiations in the emerging environment and their importance to the organization from a perspective of creating, extending, or modifying its resources to achieve congruence becomes critical (Alimpic, 2013). Organizations should extend their communication and relationships with customers, employees, and vendors in view of attaining and sustaining competitiveness (Alimpic, 2013). Further, the ability to widen customer bases through focused market penetration, acquiring new customers through additional benefits, and developing infrastructure, processes, and quality management in capitalizing opportunities to increase revenues is important for capitalizing on opportunities (Alimpic, 2013). A consultancy model approach is another strategy used by organizations to sustain competitiveness and profitability in a changing business environment (Wheals & Petch, 2013).

In such a pursuit, organizations are compelled to change the approach from a client service perspective to a consultancy driven perspective as means to generate value propositions for business sustenance (Wheals & Petch, 2013). Organization's changing perspectives toward a consultancy driven approach consider offering service driven products instead of cutting costs to be competitive, and inculcate a sales driven approach and culture into the organization (Wheals & Petch, 2013). Organizations evaluate customer value propositions through segmented perspectives to attract new customers in contemporary competitive environments (Kaur, 2015).

When price drives value propositions, financial institutions segment customer as transaction based customers, while viewing segmented customers as value driven when customers attach value propositions to organizational offerings based on features and level of flexibility (Kaur, 2015). Organizations deploy a transaction-based strategy in acquiring newly established business as they respond positively to stimuli such as pricing, while moving customers toward relationship values at a later stage when they become receptive to appreciating value propositions (Kaur, 2015). This concept is effective only to customers of new businesses, while customers from long established businesses appreciate relationship values (Kaur, 2015).

New opportunities. A signal economy is important for organizations to create opportunities to drive profitable operations in changing environments (Blossom, 2014). A signal economy generates, collects, organizes, and analyzes signals that are unprecedented in scale, speed, and accuracy; thus, organizations have the ability to sense, evaluate, and respond to real world opportunities long before such are capitalized by traditional business methods (Blossom, 2014). As they continuously re-evaluate perceived important data for the operation, organizational investment in systems that are capable of analyzing signals periodically develop in-house experts to detect market signals who build products and platforms that are attuned to the signals and thrive on small successes for larger bases.

These are critical elements for organizations winning in a signal economy (Blossom, 2014). E-commerce is growing at a considerable pace and advance request distribution techniques are mandatory in managing the data efficiently (VanderMeer, Dutta, & Datta, 2012). In an online e-commerce environment, request distribution techniques demand an information technology infrastructure that supports the growing data traffic (VanderMeer et al., 2012). Based on these parameters, a cost based dataset request distribution system had shown cost effectiveness and efficiency (VanderMeer et al., 2012).

Organic growth and growth through acquisitions are primary vehicles for organizational growth strategies (Lehmann, 2015). Organizations prefer organic growth as organizations achieve the growth through organizations' core customers, while acquisitions challenge the overall performance of an organization due to a failure in realizing assumed cost savings, loss of key employees, and the inability to generate synergy (Lehmann, 2015). In organic growth, the organizations expect their revenue growth from customer acquisitions, customer retention, or increased revenue per customer (Lehmann, 2015). Organic growth can be attained through (a) new products that opens new markets and drive the acquisition of new customers, (b) brand building to leverage higher prices, (c) use of a customer management tool such as loyalty and CRM to retain customers, and (d) channels innovation such as moving from conventional physical channels to virtual channels (Lehmann, 2015).

Marketing and distribution. In a retail environment, retailers are continuously striving to increase their competitiveness from customer-centrism and differentiated experience, and therefore, continually look for data that indicates changes in consumer behaviors (Corrigan, Craciun, & Powell, 2014). To support marketing decisions, retailers refine systems to capture the behaviors of physical and virtual shoppers based on industrial wisdom to define effective marketing and communication plans, while exploring the collected data to manipulate it towards understanding customer buying patterns that would provide opportunities to increase profitability (Corrigan et al., 2014).

An increase in advertising expenditure for new product preannouncements has an impact on organizations market value (Chen, Chiang, & Yang, 2014). Organizations performed positively in stock markets when there was an increase in advertising (Chen et al., 2014). Further, increased advertising proved positive in top-line and bottom line performance of the organizations while reducing the negative influence in trading costs (Chen et al., 2014). Social media marketing is gaining in importance for measuring business success (Drell & Davis, 2014). Organizations use social media for measuring brand awareness, customer lifetime value and sales, and access to customer sentiments through ongoing analytics (Drell & Davis, 2014). Social media is an effective medium for gathering insights of customers than for generating revenue (Drell & Davis, 2014).

Social media has demonstrated relevance to organizational revenue as consumer shift towards online engagement and purchases has been growing in the online domain (Varini & Sirsi, 2012). Organizations consider public relation activities and marketing activities to engage online communities (Varini & Sirsi, 2012). Organizations shifting towards social media platform were able to benefit in terms of revenue and profit enhancement, while social media further facilitated the sales of new value product and improved customer relationships that yielded higher profitability (Varini & Sirsi, 2012). Considering social media engagement for public relation and marketing has become a powerful tool for organizational revenue generation (Varini, & Sirsi, 2012).

Gifting has contributed towards social integration through communication, social exchange, economic exchange, and socialization (Goode, Shailer, Wilson, & Jankowski, 2014). Customization of an offering has become an important element in the virtual gifting industry (Goode et al., 2014). Virtual gifting has contributed towards the increase in revenue for organizations, as people are inclined towards utilizing customized promotions to specific target groups (Goode et al., 2014).

In customer strategic purchase decisions, fragmentation of products based on traditional features are becoming less meaningful as customers are shifting their values towards design preferences (Loffler & Decker, 2012). Price and profits of goods erode across all channels for organizations continue to focus on traditional features (Loffler & Decker, 2012). Organizations considering the customer purchase intentions align their value propositions towards the product presentation to yield better prices and profit margins (Loffler & Decker, 2012). Distribution strategies of organizations have higher possibilities of revenue generation and market staying power (Ciciretti, Hasan, & Waisman, 2015). Further, distribution strategies form alliances with reputable international distributors, resulting in penetration of attractive markets, and media critics have positive viewpoints of organizational success (Ciciretti et al., 2015).

Diversification. An organizational international experience is a critical factor that determines the limits of application in international business (Clarke, Tamaschke, & Liesch, 2013). Organizations adapt dynamic firm specific advantages through accrued international experience in international diversification while cautiously applying firm specific advantages in highly dissimilar markets (Clarke et al., 2013). Organizations expand to distance international markets and consider entry mode choices by evaluating themes such as firm specific advantages; experience based on length, scope, and diversity; and international diversification (Clarke et al., 2013). Pressure for market competitiveness strains organizational profitability in short-term contractual relationships (Carter & Findley, 2012). Organizations enter into long-term contractual relationships by way of diversifying and considering commitment towards design or brand (Carter & Findley, 2012). Organizations independent of wider legislative market governance have the freedom to manage their costs and prices due to a lack of regulatory standards (Muminovic & Pavlovic, 2012). These organizations are deprived of market expansions to explore new opportunities that are beneficial for organizational long-term profitability and sustainability (Muminovic & Pavlovic, 2012). Organizations identify alternative revenue streams, adjust services offerings and delivery, amend staffing arrangements, appeal to local stakeholders, and form strategic partnership as mechanisms to cope with budgets constraints (Prust et al., 2015).

The triple bottom line influences the success and failure of startup companies as organizations should stay focused on the mission and connect to people's emotions and needs to succeed and grow their financial objectives (Schroeder & Denoble, 2014). The triple bottom line aims to achieve success through driving an organization's compelling vision towards motivating larger numbers of people to join the mission through purchases of products and services (Schroeder & Denoble, 2014).

Human resources management. Organizations pursue risky ventures by innovating and managing limited resources and explore new opportunities in uncertain business environments. They consider innovative strategy executions and innovation focused human resource management for achieving their goals (Oke, Walumbwa, & Myers, 2012). Organizations link their coherent innovation-focused human resource policies with innovative strategy performance objectives to exploit environmental uncertainties towards revenue growth (Oke et al., 2012). Further, promoting an innovative culture toward rewards and recognition, rule breaking, and innovative behaviors, a participatory environment is driven by a member's awareness and commitment and involvement in innovation has a positive impact on organizational innovative strategic performances (Oke et al., 2012).

Behavioral economics can improve the outcome for employees and the organization, as employees make suboptimal decisions with their employee benefits (Goldsmith & Cyboran, 2013). Matching employee salary to the optimal deferral rates that would cater to their optimal savings rate and match employee advantage rate is important to keep employees motivated from benefits perspectives (Goldsmith & Cyboran, 2013). Further, healthy employees contribute better in terms of lower turnover, lower absenteeism, lower worker compensation costs, and lower healthcare cost (Goldsmith & Cyboran, 2013). Cutting back on employee benefits is dysfunctional when the business wants to invest and grow. A well-capitalized organization with positive employee mindsets would thrive in a high-pressure fast changing environment towards goals (Goldsmith & Cyboran, 2013).

Organization's profitable performances are subject to the relationship between the input of role ambiguity, self-efficacy, and autonomy with customer satisfaction and customer orientation (Pettijohn, Schaefer, & Burnett, 2014). Higher levels of self-efficacy, higher levels of autonomy, and lower levels of role ambiguity drive higher performance in customer orientation and customer satisfaction (Pettijohn et al., 2014). Training and managerial activities of the organization positively enforce the elements of self-efficacy and autonomy when employees have the adequate skills and knowledge to perform their job role (Pettijohn et al., 2014).

Conceptual Framework and Existing Knowledge

The existing body of the literature reviewed confirmed that inflation has a negative impact on business profitability (Gwin & VanHoose, 2012) and organizations consider absorbing the cost to the business by reducing profits in a situation where the cost increase cannot be transferred to the price of the product or service offered (Munjal & Sharma, 2012). In an inflation driven environment, organizations were compelled to redefine their business process and practices from a strategic perspective to sustain and grow organizational profitability (N'cho-Oguie et al., 2011). Defining a strategy to address a specific problem becomes important for organizational sustainability and growth (Rumelt, 2011). In situations where absorbing escalating costs or increasing selling prices were not viable, organizations considered revenue enhancement strategies and cost reductions strategies to sustain and grow organizational financial performances and profitability (Rust et al., 2002).

In pursuit of cost reductions, organizations reevaluate the internal process and use of resources as measures to increase efficiencies; thus, the cost of the business operation was minimized (Guni, 2014). Organizations deployed accounting techniques to understand the cost drivers and the areas of inefficacies in the process (Suleyman & Ilker, 2013), and evaluated the supply chain and logistics operations critically to enhance cost efficacies (Vinodh, Prakash, & Selvan, 2011). Further, organizations considered quality measures, standardizations measures, and business process reengineering as a means to enhance the productivity (Diaconu, 2012; Nwabueze, 2012). Working capital management and cash conversion cycles were the other areas the organization focused on reducing financing costs that would contribute positively to the organization's profitability (Banos-Caballero et al., 2014; Dorisz, 2014). Reduction in cost not only enhanced profitability but also present an opportunity for stringent competitiveness (Kruger, 2012).

In pursuit of revenue enhancement strategies, organizations considered diversifications in terms of attaining organic growth through new products and market development (Lehmann, 2015). The ability to maneuver through challenging environments depended on organizational structural capacities and the ability to create value innovative HR policies and sales processes (Blocker et al., 2012; Johnson & Friend, 2015; Oke et al., 2012). Managing customer relationships through segmentation, adopting effective pricing policies, and harnessing social media marketing, showed a positive relationship with revenue enhancements (Drell & Davis, 2014; Kaur, 2015); whereas, managing all internal and external environments contributed positively towards increasing organization's revenue streams (Soliman, 2012).

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies business leaders in Dubai used to maintain profitability in an environment of rising operational costs. Organizations define strategies as a measure to counter the prevailing problems or attain future goals (Rumelt, 2011). Given the situation of rising costs and their impact on profitability, organizations need to recognize the core drivers of the problem to define the approaches and allocate resources towards solving the problem. Kaplan and Norton (1992) defined these core drivers from financial and operational perspectives in BSC. The BSC facilitates business managers in translating their business objectives into strategy, and measure the performance of the organization within the defined core drivers (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). The BSC of Kaplan and Norton was used as the conceptual lens to understand the strategies the business managers considered to sustain profitability in an environment of increasing costs.

The literature reviewed provided an in-depth understanding of process and strategies for reducing business costs and increasing revenues in different circumstances and various markets across the world. Many were not a direct response to situations of macroeconomic forces that compelled organizations redefining their strategies. The literature addressed cost reduction and revenue enhancement processes, practices, and strategies in different organizational and business situations, thus giving a deeper and comprehensive view to the body of existing knowledge. Further, the reviewed literature did not have any relevance to the Dubai market or its context and, therefore, it was interesting to observe the outcome of the study and the correlations to the existing body of knowledge. The findings may show business managers the applicability and relevance of this knowledge to the Dubai market.

Transition and Summary

The study resulted from the macroeconomic situation of escalating business costs due to higher inflation rates in UAE in general and Dubai specifically. The business managers experiencing the problem of managing profitability in a competitive environment look for alternative measures to sustain and grow their businesses profitably. The overarching research question for this study was: What strategies do business leaders in Dubai use to maintain profitability with rising operational costs? I reviewed the data through the conceptual framework of the BSC of Kaplan and Norton (1992) and the findings may assist practicing business managers with a platform to use their resources effectively. I accessed and reviewed the body of existing knowledge through peer-reviewed articles and I discussed the profitability management through cost reduction and revenue enhancement strategies.

Section 2 of this study contains a discussion of the methodology and process for the study. The section includes a discussion and analysis of the researcher's role and the profile of participants, sampling techniques, and ethical governance of the study, research design, data collection instruments, and techniques, data analyzing techniques, and methods of establishing the reliability and validity. The section contains the summary and transition to the final section.

In Section 3 of this study, I discuss and present the findings in relation to the conceptual framework. The findings focus on strategies business leaders used to maintain profitability with rising operating costs. Included are the themes and patterns emerged from the study where I discuss them in context of literature reviewed and their applicability for other organizations in the region. Further, the out of scope findings are included where I have noted them and recommended future studies. Section 3 contains a summary of the findings, challenges faced, limitations, and scope for further exploration.

Section 2: The Project

The inflation rate in Dubai, UAE rose to 5-year highs in 2014 and raised further by 28% in the first half of 2015 (Inflation and Consumer Price Index, 2015). Business managers in Dubai face challenges with sustaining profitability and, therefore, look for strategies to manage the situation. I explored the strategies used by business leaders in Dubai for maintaining profitability in an environment of escalating operating costs, thus evaluate an appropriate research design, participants and relevant data collection, in addition to analysis mechanism, in finding a reference for business managers of Dubai in developing sustainable strategies to counter operational challenges that affect their business profitability.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies business managers use to maintain profitability with rising operating costs. Two senior business managers from two organizations in Dubai participated in semistructured face-to-face interviews to describe their strategies toward successfully maintaining the profitability of the organization. Based on the answers to the face-to-face interviews, four junior managers of these organizations in Dubai participated in a semistructured focus group interview to methodologically triangulate all data. The population was appropriate for the study because these senior managers were responsible for the businesses' profitability while the junior managers execute the strategies. Successfully implemented strategies of organizations become examples of best practices for business managers in managing resources effectively in an environment of rising operational costs that challenge the profit sustainability.

Role of the Researcher

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the key instrument (Xu & Storr, 2012) and plays a central role in the data collection phase of the study (Draper & Swift, 2011). The effectiveness of the study depends on the observational methods used and the investigations skills of the researcher (Parry et al., 2014). The researcher's ability to listen, remain engaged, suspend judgment, and probe without being seen as an interrogator are important for capturing the information effectively (Draper & Swift, 2011).

In this multiple case study, I was the instrument interacting, collecting, and analyzing data from the semistructured and focus group interviews. I live and work in Dubai as a senior manager responsible for countrywide business operations. I am personally experiencing the escalating operating costs and the challenges of sustaining profitability.

The problem studied pertains to the environment in which I live; therefore, I consider my cultural and social knowledge of the environment to be my strength. Qualitative interviews are prone to bias due to the researcher's personal lens. My being part of the environment, the escalating costs have affected the business I manage as well. One of my views of managing the situation is through redefining the remuneration policies while critically evaluating and enhancing the productivity of the human resources. I was conscious of my personal lens on the subject and mitigated my personal bias with the use of interview protocols and member checking strategies as discussed by Dibley (2011). I guided the interview through a protocol (Appendix E) as an interview protocol increases the reliability (Yin, 2014). I used the interview protocol framework as suggested by Yin (2014) in defining the overview of the study, data collection procedures, specific data collection questions, and the guide for the case study report (Yin, 2014). This proposed framework guided me in keeping my focus on the topic and prepared against possible problems as noted by Yin (2014).

The study was free from any human subject experimentation as defined by the U.S Department of Health and Human Services code of federal regulations, also known as the Belmont Report. Further, I have successfully completed the National Institute of Health web-based training program and obtained the certification number 1429531 on 03/17/2014.

Participants

Five organizations were shortlisted based on access to information and approached personally to explain the purpose of the study and to gain their willingness in principle to participate in the study. Two potential organizations from the five were shortlisted based on their potential willingness to spend time and provide access to nonsensitive information. The organizations had been in existence for over 5 years and established regionally through direct branch operations or through franchise partners. The organizations had 30 to 100 employees, and the operational heads of the two institutions agreed to participate in the study as the primary respondents. They indicated their concerns in exposing financial and sensitive data during the process. These participants had the necessary knowledge and experience to answer the research question for this study. Further, both primary respondents agreed to nominate two junior managers from each organization for the focus group discussions. The junior managers were in the capacity of department heads or business unit heads who were the implementers of organizational strategies, policies, and practices who also had the necessary knowledge and experience to answer the research question for this study.

I sent formal letters to the participants before commencing the study and described their rights as well as the ethical governance of the study in detail. I approached the primary participants in three stages considering their busy schedules. Each stage included debriefing and member checking of the previous discussion to establish the working relationship, gain confidence, and validate the findings. The participants and organizations met the criteria as they both operated in the relevant geography, were responsible for the total operations, and managed medium scale businesses. These participants had the necessary knowledge and experience to answer the research question of this study.

Research Method and Design

In this study, I explored the strategies used by business leaders in Dubai towards maintaining profitability in an environment of escalating operating costs. The study considered qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method research for the study. The qualitative design empowers the researcher to explore processes, narrate meanings, and understand effective behaviors on a business problem (Mboga, 2013) that focuses on contemporary issues that may require tracing operational links over time (Yin, 2014). Researchers' use quantitative design in explaining relationships between predetermined variables (Michel & Wiid, 2013), compare the outcome against defined business environments (Kodama, 2013), that focuses on historical events, which has a quantifiable outcome (Yin, 2014).

Method

The selection of an appropriate research method depends on the research question, the researcher's control over the phenomenon, and the period of occurrence and control, whether contemporary or historical (Yin, 2014). Research questions of *how*, *why*, and *what* that are exploratory are justified for a qualitative research method while historical or experimental studies that focus on frequencies or incidents are justified for quantitative researchers (Yin, 2014).

In qualitative research, readers get closer to the problem in a personal way as they see the problem through the researcher's eyes (Bansal & Corley, 2011) while quantitative methods publish descriptive, experimental, and outcome based findings (Wester, Borders, Boul, & Horton, 2013). Mixed method researchers bring in greater insights that resonate beyond the specific context of origin, though this method has challenges with scope and outcome (Zou, Sunindijo, & Dainty, 2014). When the problem researched is complex and has qualitative and quantitative elements, the mixed method approach could provide breadth and the depth of the study (Griensven, Moore, & Hall, 2014).

I did not choose a quantitative research method for the study. The purpose of the proposed study was to explore strategies the business managers used in maintaining profitability; therefore, the research process focused on a contemporary business problem and emerging process and practices, rather than determining the relationship of variables. The study did not include measuring frequencies or incidents, nor a comparison of outcomes against different predefined variables as found in quantitative studies. Finally, the study was not complex and was limited in scope. For these reasons, I found that a qualitative research method was appropriate for the study

For example, Atrek, Marcone, Gregori, Temperini, and Moscatelli (2014) used the qualitative method to investigate the critical and actively managed links in enhancing relationship between supply chain members, while Jasinavicius and Jasinavicius (2011), used qualitative method in exploring the strategies that managed business competitiveness and profitability against low priced producers from East Asia. Enqvist et al. (2014) used a quantitative research method in examining the role of the business cycle with working capital and profitability, while Banos-Caballero et al. (2014) used quantitative research method to examine the relationship between working capital and corporate performance. Banos-Caballero et al demonstrated the effectiveness of qualitative research methodology in examining relationships, which correlates with the proposed study objectives.

Research Design

In the qualitative research method, a phenomenological approach is selected when the study is focused on understanding the essence of experience (Dowden, Gunby, Warren, & Boston, 2014), while the narrative approach is used in exploring real life experiences of individuals (Hughes, Gibbons, & Mynatt, 2013). The ethnographical study focuses on translating shared patterns and emotions of groups (Baxter, Goffin, & Szwejczewski, 2014).

A case study is effective when a researcher uses it as a source of knowledge as an example to be followed or as a sample of what happened, or as a source of vicarious experience (Mariotto, Pinto Zanni, & De Moraes, 2014). The purpose of the proposed study was exploring strategies business managers used to maintain profitability with rising operating costs, capturing the essence of experiences or understanding the shared patterns of cultures may not be beneficial.

The case study method facilitates the process of inquiring about a simplistic or complex problem in the real world (Khan, 2014; Parry et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). Researchers use a case study method to find answers to *how* and *what* questions (Yin, 2014). Case studies identify the links between events over time (Parry et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). Case studies may involve one organization and location or multiple organizations and locations in situations (Yin, 2014). Diaconu (2012) used the case study method to inquire the operational efficiencies to understand how low-cost airlines emerge and operate, while Nwabueze (2012) used the case study design to inquire how to improve manufacturing processes. In both the studies, the case study was effective in identifying possible processes, programs, and activities for improving business efficiencies (Diaconu, 2012; Nwabueze, 2012). Based on the inquiring nature of this study, which aimed at understanding how organizations defined processes, programs, and activities in managing their escalating operational cost, a case study design was considered effective than other qualitative research designs.

The research design for this study is a multiple case study; therefore, the quantification of data saturation point, in terms of themes or failing to produce new knowledge may not be applicable as the data saturation for one may not be sufficient for another (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). Further, the data is saturated when little or no new thematically coded data found from the participant (Morse, Lowery, & Steury, 2014). The attainment of data saturation ensures the completeness defined by paying attention to boundaries of the case, demonstrating on efforts made on collecting evidence or triangulating with focus group discussions, and not limiting the case study artificially due to exhaustion of resources (Yin, 2014). Focus groups are an effective supplement source of validating qualitative researchers, and a multi-method study source for achieving triangulation (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). This study included methodological triangulation process to ensure data saturation.

Population and Sampling

The purpose of this case study was to explore the strategies that business leaders in Dubai used in maintaining the profitability of their organizations. The samples were drawn from the population of organizations operating in Dubai. To derive at an appropriate sample, I considered experience, snowball, and purposive sampling methods. The experience sampling method is used when a study intends to capture the flow of the temporal and dynamic nature of work (Butts, Becker, & Boswell, 2015), whereas snowball sampling is used when samples are developed progressively (Theocharous et al., 2015). Purposive sampling is used to attain an in-depth understanding of a particular group of people (Ling, 2013; Roy & Basu, 2015; Turcan, 2011). This study intended to explore the challenges experienced by organizations, understand strategies used, and explore experiences of implementing the new practices. I considered the purposive sampling method to be more effective than other sampling methods because I intended to explore the strategies the organizations implemented in managing their profitability.

UAE businesses are not open to sharing business information. Lockshin et al. (2011) noted similar cultural challenges in their study to explore the wine listing strategies of five-star restaurants in China. Per Yin (2014), the selection of samples can be straightforward if the study is an unusual case, or chosen through special arrangements and access. Since the access is limited due to cultural challenges and limited participants' willingness, two organizations operating in UAE participated in the case study. The two organizations are from the SME sector that has been in business for over 5 years. Though the scopes for wider sample prospects were limited, I considered homogeneousness of samples to eliminate attribution errors that increased the validity as suggested by Turcan (2011).

Interviews are effective in extracting the experiences, meanings, values, and priorities of the participants, while semistructured interviews are an effective method to find answers to a list of issues and questions (Draper & Swift, 2011). In a qualitative case study, Werner and Herman (2012) used semistructured interviews to understand the operating efficiencies, while (Kumar et al., 2013) used semistructured interviews with department heads to explore the supply chain management for global competitiveness and profitability. In my study, senior business managers from the two organizations participated in semistructured face-to-face interviews to describe their strategies toward successfully maintaining the profitability

Focus group interviews are more than a group interview, as they have the capability of accessing a group's own vocabulary, concerns, norms, and knowledge (Draper & Swift, 2011). Focus groups are an effective supplement source for validating qualitative researchers, and a multi-method study source for achieving triangulation (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). Santos and Ferreira (2012) used collective discussions to validate emerging information, whereas Morse et al. (2014) reached data saturation through focus group interviews. Based on the senior business manager interviews, four junior managers of these organizations participated in a semistructured focus group interview, as a process of methodological triangulation. Further, qualitative interviews support researchers reaching data saturation by obtaining in-depth information (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012); thus, my study design used senior manager interviews and junior manager focus group interviews for the methodological triangulation process to ensure data saturation and the validity of the study results.

The location and equipment used in interviews are important to capture the narration (Doody & Noonan, 2013). I conducted the interviews in the selected case study organization's business premises, as this gave access to relevant artifacts. A predefined interview protocol (Appendix E) was the guiding tool for conducting the face-to-face interviews with the senior managers of the selected organizations (Doody & Noonan, 2013). A feedback driven exploration significantly enhances the validity and reliability due to the methodological rigor and the error correction mechanism (Boesch, Schwaninger, Weber, & Scholz, 2013). Thus, I conducted multiple interviews with the two senior managers to understand the findings and verify the understanding to establish construct validity. The focus group discussions consisted of two junior managers of each organization. Thus, the respondents may guard their statements to maintain confidentiality fearing political implications (Sommers, Arntson, Kenney, & Epstein, 2013). Each focus group interview took place separately to ensure the confidentiality of respective organizations information.

I considered purposive sample population. My decision to use purposive sampling considered the ability to attain an in-depth understanding of a particular group of people in a closed culture. Further, I triangulated the data collected through the process of in-depth interviews with senior business managers with focus group discussions of the junior managers to enhance the validity of the study results.

Ethical Research

Researchers using a case study design have the challenge of obtaining and maintaining consents during the process of securing permission for data collection (Plankey-Videla, 2012). A pre-informed process ensured permission from the gatekeepers and obtaining the confidence of the respondents. I contacted the target respondents, based on the selected samples, by telephone to arrange a face-to-face meeting. The objective of the meeting was to (a) explain the overview of the study, (b) obtain the initial willingness of participation, (c) to understand the norms and procedures of organizations, and (d) understand the role of the gatekeepers. Based on the exploration of organizational norms and procedures, I sent the consent form (see Appendix B) to the respective authorities in seeking the consents for a case study. Upon confirmation from the authority, I gave a consent form (see Appendix C) to each of the primary respondents and a consent form (see Appendix D) to each of the focus group respondents and obtained their consents prior to data collection.

The study participants did not consist of any vulnerable respondents; I maintained beneficence and justice by concealing identity, maintaining confidentiality, and translating the knowledge of the respondents (Rhodes & Miller, 2012; Wester, 2011; Zimmerman & Racine, 2012). Further, I maintained the autonomy of the participants by explaining their rights for participation, the right for opting out of answering specific questions and the right for withdrawing from the study any time during the process. In the event that the participants find themselves to be uncomfortable during the study and choose to exercise their rights, their decision complies with unconditionally.

I selected the respondents through professional contact; I did not offer any incentives. Upon request, I agreed to share a summary of the findings. Fein and Kulik (2011) recommended keep the data confidential and protected; therefore, the interview recordings, transcripts, and artifacts collected are stored safely and securely for five years from the date of collection; I ensure that participant's identity was encrypted with the use of coded names to ensure confidentiality. The names of organizations, participant including substitutions were coded alphanumerically and geographical approximation to conceal names, locations, and other identifiable information. After 5 years, I will destroy all recording, transcripts, and artifacts deleting them from the storage devices and shredding them with the use of shredder machine. The IRB approval number for the study is 05-16-16-0453194.

Data Collection Instruments

Interviews and focus group discussions are the main source of data for case studies (Yin, 2014). Sensemaking becomes an important element in qualitative data collection (Dana, Dawes, & Peterson, 2013), that leads to the process of constructing social reality (Marshall, 2014). I used semistructured interviews to keep the discussions in line during the data collection process, while through focus group discussions I captured the meanings and values based on participant perspectives and experiences concerning the topic discussed. Semistructured interviews and focus group interviews are primary tools for data collection (Draper & Swift, 2011).

I am part of the environment of the study; therefore, I am the primary instrument of data collection as noted by Marshall and Rossman (2015). The environmental knowledge, cultural understanding, and in-depth knowledge of the problem increased the quality of observation (Xu & Storr, 2012). Subsequent probing questions in seeking clarity for misconceptions or out of context notions enhanced the validation process (Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012). Dibley (2011) described how the researcher's personal lens could influence how one views the data.

I used an interview protocol to mitigate different challenges of framing interview questions (Honan, 2014). I deployed a protocol focused on getting responses specific to the research problem through a framework of guiding questions (see Appendix E) and guided the interviews by a protocol; the participants express their views freely within the defined scope. A process of probing and follow-up questions allowed flexibility, while keeping control of the proceedings as recommended by Pezalla et al. (2012). I audio recorded the interviews and transcribed the recorded audio files manually. Through the member checking process I presented the transcribed data to the respondents individually to seek the concurrence of accuracy as a process of enhancing reliability and validity as discussed by Awad (2014), Harper and Cole (2012), and Yin (2014) and to ensure that I captured the meaning of what was said.

Journaling is an important process in case studies to collect data, as interviews are the primary data collection techniques used in qualitative studies (Arseven, 2014). I find reflexive journaling to be very important to qualitative research. Journaling is a reflective process; one writes down everything seen and heard and then, once away from the research site, reflects on that information to identify themes and patterns from the observations (Snyder, 2012). Through the process of journaling, I listened, remained engaged, suspended judgment, and probed to capture the information effectively as described by Draper and Swift (2010).

Data Collection Technique

I conducted semistructured, on-site face-to-face interviews in three stages to manage the time and content validation. The interviews were voice recorded with the prior consent of the participants. The voice recording took place through an android mobile device and stored in a micro removable disc for transferring the date to a Windows-based computer for transcribing. The consolidated interpretations of the interviews, reflective journal notes, documents, and artifacts were all member checked before adopting for analysis as described by Harper and Cole (2012). The emerging themes, critical decisions, and related outcomes formed the basis for the focus group interview.

Qualitative researchers collect data using techniques of interviews, observations, and document analysis (Arseven, 2014; Dana et al., 2013; Yin, 2014). Interviewing of participants was the primary tool of data collection for this study as interviews were effective in eliciting the data for answering the research questions in qualitative studies as discussed by Arseven (2014) and Draper and Swift (2011). The structure of the interviews was determined by the number of participants and the way they are administered (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Draper & Swift, 2011), while journaling keeps track of important information and creative ideas (Atkinson et al., 2012). Given the limited number of participants and the objective of seeking answers to a specific research question through multiple case studies, the interview structure demands control and flexibility (Dana et al., 2013; Draper & Swift, 2011). Semistructured interviews provide the necessary flexibility of structuring, phasing, and placing the interview to seek the answers to the research questions while controlling the questions and proceedings to keep the discussion in line (Dana et al., 2013; Draper & Swift, 2011). Semistructured face-to-face interviews (see Appendix E) were conducted as the primary data collection technique (Dana et al., 2013; Doody & Noonan, 2013; Draper & Swift, 2011), while journaling, document analysis, and discussion regarding the observation of artifacts was used as the supporting process for the primary data (Arseven, 2014; Atkinson et al., 2012; Yin, 2014). Further, I used fully structured focus-group interviews as data collection techniques for methodologically triangulating the findings (Dilshad & Latif, 2013).

Face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews, and observation of artifacts have challenges and limitations (Dilshad & Latif, 2013; Draper & Swift, 2011; Parry et al., 2014; Sommers et al., 2013). In face-to-face interviews, participants may respond what is socially desirable, while the researcher’s ability to listen, remain engaged, suspend judgment, and probe without being seen as interrogation as well as managing the researcher's bias are important for capturing the information effectively (Draper & Swift, 2011; Sommers et al., 2013). Focus group discussions have limitations and challenge scope and validity of the study results (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). Some of the challenges of focus group discussions are getting participants together in a timely manner, managing the potential dominance of a few overly aggressive participants, and the competency of the moderator (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). The effectiveness of qualitative study results can depend on the observational methods used and the investigator's skills in accounting for these challenges (Parry et al., 2014). I conducted the interviews based on predefined interview protocol and moderated the focus group interviews by probing, pausing, and involving all the participants as shown by Dilshad and Latif (2013).

The focus group discussions included a semistructured interview structure with an objective of understanding the problem and related actions implemented by the second tier managers. In this process, a different set of opening questions (see Appendix E) were posed to the groups to identify the elements of the findings from the primary interviews. I probed the key elements of primary findings as the process of seeking validity and conformity as noted by Dilshad and Latif (2013).

To protect the confidentiality of the participants and the data, I have kept the electronic and physical data in secured environments. The interview recordings, transcripts, journal notes, and artifacts collected were stored safely and securely for 5 years from the date of collection to comply with IRB guidelines. All physical data collected are stored in a safety locker; while the electronic data are stored in a password protected external hard disk. Further, after 5 years, I will destroy all recording, transcripts, and artifacts by deleting them from the storage devices and shredding them with the use of shredder machine.

Data Organization Techniques

I transcribed and verified the interview recordings prior to organizing them for analysis as recommended by Wahyuni (2012) and then imported the transcribed data along with the collected artifacts to NVivo 10 software program, organized them into different categories, and saved them in the internal folders. Further, single occurrences of meanings interpreted into meaningful themes and collected artifacts incorporated into the groups for faster referencing (Vohra, 2014). The grouped data drew future inferences (Crowe et al., 2011; Vohra, 2014; Wahyuni, 2012). These raw data, using NVivo 10, organized as nodes for analysis. The hard copy data of transcripts, reflective journals, filed notes, and collected artifacts organized into file folders categorized by themes, participants or applications in synchronization of NVivo internal folders, and stored in a locked filing cabinet for the period of five years. I labeled the interview recordings with code names and saved them in a password protected hard drive for a period of 5 years.

Data Analysis

Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) are tools that guide researchers in coding and grouping unstructured data captured from interviews (Yin, 2014). NVivo 10 CAQDAS coded and grouped the interview data of the study

(Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012; Watson, 2013). Although NVivo 10 software is a tool that assists in the process of analysis, the strategy of theoretical propositions (Yin, 2014) and technique of five-phased cycle of Yin (2011) was the primary data analysis techniques I used in the study.

Given the study proposition of the increase in operational costs and its impact on business profitability, the strategy of theoretical propositions aligns in examining, categorizing, and tabulating the business actions taken in managing the costs and profitability. Alternatively, though the ground up data analysis strategy provides an understating of emerging patterns, as a novice researcher establishing useful connections from the information gathered is challenging (Yin, 2014). Further, the strategy of developing a case description is an alternative for theoretical propositions and ground up strategies, while examining plausible rival explanations combine all these defined strategies (Yin, 2014). I did not consider the strategies of ground up, developing case description, and examining the plausible rival explanations. In theoretical proposition based analysis, the study focused on the contextual condition of the study, that is the impact on profitability and examine the explanations revealed in countering the condition. The framework further synchronizes with the study conceptual framework of diagnosis, guiding policies, and coherent actions taken by the organizations.

Dooley (2002) defined a structural analysis process and reflective process as techniques for analyzing qualitative data. The structural analysis technique help researchers identify emerging patterns within the data while, reflective analysis build on researcher personal views, which are used in critical science and phenomenological studies (Dooley, 2002). Further, the study used two sources as methodological triangulation. Focus groups are an effective supplement source of validating qualitative researchers, and a multi-method study source for achieving triangulation (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). I methodologically triangulated the interview findings through focus group discussion of four junior managers from these organizations and citing of artifacts.

Five-phase cycle of data analysis defined by Yin's (2011) supports the process of analyzing the emerging themes in the data. The five-phase analyses consist of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. The compiling phase involves organizing the data to create a database while disassembling phases involve breaking down the compiled data into fragments and labels. The reassembling process involves in clustering and categorizing the labels into a sequence of groups. The interpretation stage involves in creating narratives from the sequences and groups for conclusions. The five-phase analysis was the technique, while nodes, codes, and query function of NVivo 10 were as the tools to support the analysis. Through the process of five-phase analysis, I categorized the data and coded the data through reasoning. The coding process identifies the frequency of words and phrases used by the participants. The narrations emerge from the themes were compared with the findings of literature review and conceptual framework for the conclusion.

Explanation building, time serial analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis were techniques I evaluated as alternate techniques for data analysis. Techniques of explanation building were not considered as the technique as it is effective in building an explanation about the case (Yin, 2014), while the proposed case study objectives are to understand the actions taken to overcome a specific challenge. I did not consider the time serial analysis technique because the defined case problem has not been in existence for the past several years and, therefore, there are no historical data for defining a pattern (Yin, 2014). The logic model has the feature of analyzing the causes and effects that are useful for the study; however, the cause and effect feature is effective in analyzing the complex chain of occurrence (Yin, 2014) where the proposed study focusses on limited environment occurrence. Lastly, the cross-case synthesis is effective in aggregating the findings across the series of case studies (Yin, 2014), which is not the intended outcome for the research question. Five-phase structural analysis technique was the most effective data analysis technique for my study.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Dependability on the collected data in relation to the answers to the research questions becomes the core element of establishing the reliability of a study (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013). I used the member checking process as the tool to establish the reliability (Turcan, 2011; Yin, 2014). To ensure the meaning of the answers to the research question were captured with accuracy, I used a three stage interview process with member checking each session at the beginning of the proceeding sessions as defined in the interview protocol (see Appendix E). Further, to ensure reliability is maintained throughout the process, all captured data was coded and analyzed through NVivo, computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS),

Validity

Deriving on accurate reflection of the case studied through the process of collecting and interpreting data meaningfully defines the validity of the study (Oluwatayo, 2012; Yin, 2011). I ensured the validity of the study results by establishing credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Dooley, 2002; Yin, 2011). The proposed study established the credibility by methodological triangulation of the data through focus group discussion and citing of artifacts (Dilshad & Latif, 2013), while established the transferability through the process of member checking and data saturation (Harper & Cole, 2012). I established the subjectivity audit, which mitigates the researcher bias, through the process of member checking, journaling, and observation of artifacts (Dibley, 2011) to ensure conformity.

The study within the defined scopes of establishing the reliability and validity ensures the results to be realistic (Harper & Cole, 2012) and be repeatable in the future researchers. The process of proposed member checking and data saturation ensured the findings to be a guideline for readers in enriching multiple options for managing business operations profitability. Further, the study results can enable one to understand specific business practices and methods deployed by global organizations in human resource management and compensations management, outsourcing methods, and supply chain management process as a means to sustaining profitability.

Transition and Summary

The study aims to identify strategies used by two organizations in sustaining profitability in an environment of escalating operating cost. The qualitative case study design empowers the researcher to explore processes, narrate meanings, and understand effective behaviors on a business problem that focuses on contemporary issues, and case studies are effective in understanding the sources of vicarious experiences. Since the proposed study intends to explore the challenges faced by organizations in UAE, through the purposive sampling method, two organizations in Dubai participated as the sample organizations for the study.

Senior business managers from the two organizations participated in semistructured face-to-face interviews to describe their strategies toward successfully maintaining the profitability. The interview findings triangulated through focus group discussion of four junior managers from these organizations and citing of artifacts. The collected data was organized and analyzed using NVivo 10 (CAQDAS) software program. The study used the interview protocol, member checking, methodological triangulation, and subjectivity audit to establish the reliability and the validity. Further, the study ensured the ethical conduct by not considering any vulnerable respondents, concealing identity, maintaining confidentiality, and the autonomy of the participant.

In Section 3 of this study, I discuss and present the findings in relation to the conceptual framework. The findings focus on how organizations diagnosed the problem, what were the guiding policies considered, and what actions leaders took in arresting the situation. The themes and patterns emerged from the study are discussed in the context of literature reviewed and their applicability for other organizations in the region. Further, the out of scope findings if any, I noted and recommended for future studies. Section 3 concludes with a summary of the findings, challenges faced, limitations, and scope for further exploration.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Section 3 begins with an introduction to the study that addresses the purpose of the study, the research question, and a brief summary of findings. Further, Section 3 contains: (a) an overview of the study, (b) a detailed presentation of findings, (c) an application to professional practice, (d) an implication for social change, (e) a recommendation for action, (f) a recommendation for further study, (g) reflections, and (h) the conclusion.

Overview of Study

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies business managers used in maintaining profitability in an environment of rising operating costs. The study was prompted by the rising of inflation rate in Dubai, UAE to 5-year highs in 2014, which continued to rise further by 28% in the first half of 2015 (Inflation and Consumer Price Index, 2015). My intent was to capture the effective processes, actions, and changes some of the successful organizational leaders adopted during this period to maintain organizational profitability.

I conducted semistructured interviews with two senior managers from the SME sector in Dubai, UAE. The interviews had three phases focusing on identifying the impact of inflation on business profitability, the guiding principles for defining strategies for sustaining profitability, and the challenges and outcome of implementing the strategies. The findings were methodologically triangulated through a three-phase member checking process and semistructured focus group interviews of two junior managers responsible for operationalizing strategies. The process of member checking facilitated data saturation. I entered the data into NVivo software for analysis of patterns for developing themes to explore the key strategies that answered the research question. The themes that resulted from the analysis focused primarily on reducing operating costs and increasing revenue to compensate for the eroding profitability of the organizations. The cost reduction strategies used were organizational resource restructuring, resources optimizing, vendor negations to reduce purchase prices, and redefining credit terms to the customers. The revenue increase strategies reflected action towards penetration of new market segments, customer profiling for contractual offerings, and enhancing customer satisfaction through engagement.

Presentation of the Findings

The two organizations included in the study were SMEs based in Dubai, UAE. One organization was in the professional education industry (PE) while the other belonged to the foodstuff trading industry (FT). Both organizational leaders recognized the impact of inflation on financial performances within the monthly and quarterly review meetings. (PE, personal communication, 05.25.2016; FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016). The organizational leaders experienced and recognized the decline in revenues and operating profits during this period, while the foodstuff trading company experienced eroding liquidity position additionally. (PE, personal communication, 05.25.2016; FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016). These findings are presented below in Table 1.

Table 1

The Impact of Inflation

Participant Answers	Number	Percentage of Total
Increase in Operational Cost	2	100%
Reduction in Revenue	2	100%
Impact on Working Capital	1	50%

The respondents agreed that decreases in revenue are driven by the reduction in purchasing power while the cost increase was driven by escalating rental and utility cost (PE, personal communication, 05.25.2016; FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016). Respondents considered cost reduction and revenue increase options as the strategic direction to sustain profitability (PE, personal communication, 05.25.2016; FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016). The approach and the options considered regarding the strategic direction of the organization resulted in different perspectives based on the industry within which they operated. Cost reduction and revenue increasing were the two strategic directions found within the organizations. The findings are depicted in Table 2

Table 2

The Strategic Direction

Participant Answers	Number	Percentage of Total
Reduction of Cost	2	100%
Increase in Revenue	2	100%

The findings supported the existing body of knowledge, which indicates organizations consider cost reduction or revenue growth as broader measures in sustaining profitability (Rus et al., 2002). Further, organizational leaders demonstrated compliance with the conceptual framework of BSC as discussed by Kaplan and Norton (1992), suggesting that organizational performance is measured by the firm's financial performance. Thus, organizational leaders consider increasing revenue and profitability through attaining customer objectives and internal process goals, while cost efficacies and profits enhanced through innovation as well as reaching learning objectives (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). Organizational leaders consider business model, value network, and resource management as tools to redefine strategies in situations of internal and external operating environments changed to an extent where the existing strategies are no longer effective (Ghezzi, 2013).

Emergent Theme 1: Cost Reduction Strategies

The study results revealed that inflation was the primary driver of operational cost increase (PE, personal communication, 05.25.2016; FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016). The findings supported the existing body of knowledge, which indicates economic inflation affects the financial performance of organizations (N'cho-Oguie et al., 2011). The increase in building rental, utility, and communication costs were the major contributor to the increased operational cost. Conversely, the increase in goods and services costs were not mentioned nor recognized as contributing to increases in operational costs. Table 3 depicts the cost drivers recognized by the respondents.

Table 3

The Primary Cost Drivers

Participant Answers	Number	Percentage of Total
Building Rent and Utility	2	100%
Communication	1	50%
Goods and Service Costs	0	0%

Although the increase in rental and utility costs and the increased goods and services costs did not significantly impact the organization's operational costs, increase in rent and utilities, as well as goods and services cost had negatively impacted employee cost of living. Employees of both the organizations made formal and informal requests to increase their housing allowances (PE, personal communication, 05.25.2016; FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016). The requests of the employees were not considered as viable options by the managers of either organization. Instead, organizations considered fixed and variable operational cost reduction options as the strategic directions to mitigate the cost impacts.

The study results revealed facility downsizing, manpower restructuring, purchase cost reduction, process and commercial terms restructuring, as major strategic actions taken in view of reducing operational costs. The findings supported the existing body of knowledge, which indicates organizations consider various options in reducing their business costs to compete nationally and internationally (Kruger, 2012). Further, within the existing body of knowledge, researchers suggested that organizations define prompting actions towards restructuring, outsourcing and relocating, downsizing, and bankruptcy as strategic directions towards reducing costs (Drahokoupil, 2014), when the organizations demonstrated compliance. Table 4 depicts the prompting actions considered by the respondents.

Table 4

Fixed and Variable Cost Reduction Activities

Participant Answers	Number	Percentage of Total
Facility Downsizing	1	50%
Manpower Restructure	1	50%
Purchase Cost Reduction	1	50%
Process Restructure	1	50%
Commercial Terms Restructure	1	50%

The decision to fix cost reduction and variable cost reductions were driven by the available options and the business models of the two organizations. The buildings and facilities were the major cost components for the education institute, while the inventory of cost of goods sold was the major cost component for the foodstuff company. The education institute leaders focused on fixed cost reduction strategies (reflective journal, 05.25.2016, 05.29.2016) while the foodstuff company leaders focused on reducing their cost of goods purchased and distribution efficiencies of goods sold (reflective journal, 05.24.2016, 05.26.2016). Findings from both the organizations demonstrated that BSC is a technique for assessing performance compliance with the conceptual framework of BSC (Kaplan & Norton, 1992), that organizations internal efficiency objectives facilitate reaching excellence through critical internal processes and building competencies (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). For example, the balanced scorecard was used as a technique for assessing performance by Nigerian banks (Ibrahim, 2015).

Facility downsizing. The organizational leaders focused on reducing the cost of building and facilities critically evaluated the capacity and utility of their facilities. The evaluation revealed the excess capacities in classroom facilities that leaders kept in anticipation of future business potentials, and the common but underutilized recreational facilities. Further, the organization was in the process of shifting to a better locality with better facilities. The primary strategic decision was to downsize the facilities by surrendering the excess classroom facilities and the underutilized common recreation facilities (PE, personal communication, 05.29.2016).

Further, the decision to relocate was suspended (PE, focus group discussion, 06.05.2016). The action of downsizing the excessive facilities reduced the building rental and utility cost by 20%-30% (PE, personal communication, 05.29.2016). The findings supported the existing body of knowledge, which indicates organizations will rationalize and retain only the facilities that have the potential for contributing to the long-term profits (Guni, 2014). The managers considering the facility rationalization indicated that the organizations considered internal efficiency objectives through critically evaluating the internal facilities and competencies that align with serving customer needs defined by the study framework of BSC (Kaplan & Norton, 1992).

Manpower restructuring. Leaders critically evaluated the roles, responsibilities, and costs of each employee against the requests and demands by employees for an increase in remuneration. The evaluation revealed that sustaining the existing staff by obliging their demands for higher remuneration to be an expensive proposition while merging multiple roles; refreshing existing positions with new and less experienced employees emerged as viable proposition (PE, personal communication, 05.25.2016). Participants considered a strategy for restructuring manpower. The existing body of knowledge supports these findings, indicating that organizational leaders consider innovative options in mitigating the financial impact of raising labor costs (Manuj et al., 2013).

The senior management roles merged with multiple responsibilities made few positions redundant (PE, personal communication, 05.29.2016). Leaders managed the transition of mergers and redundancy smoothly due to exposure and awareness among each manager regarding total organizations operations (PE, focus group discussion, 05.06.2016). The existing employees who chose to resign were then replaced by leaders with new resources and at a lower remuneration (PE focus group discussion, 05.06.2016). The new employees participated in a rigorous training program to enhance their skills (PE, focus group discussion, 05.06.2016). This was possible because the organization had the resources and infrastructure for training and development (PE, focus group discussion, 05.06.2016). The organization did not force an employee to resign but was open in accepting a resignation from those who pursued better remunerations in other organizations (PE, focus group discussion, 05.06.2016). The actions conform to the body of knowledge as organizations consider the options of limiting the number of employees to minimize manpower cost (Guni, 2014).

The strategy of manpower restructuring had multiple challenges during the implementation process. The organizational leaders faced the challenge of employee acceptance of newly hired managers and decreasing morale due to high employee turnover (PE, personal communication, 06.02.2016). The Human Resource (HR) department played a pivotal role in continuously engaging staff members and managers through counseling and a mentoring process. During this engagement process, the HR team continued to apprise the members regarding the rationale behind decisions and the benefits to the majority of the organization’s employees.

Purchase cost reduction. The foodstuff trading company leaders considered the reduction of overall purchase costs; working capital had a significant impact on the organizational cost structure (FT, reflective journal notes, 05.24.2016). The organizational leaders considered the restructuring of the facilities and resources to be the last option. The evaluation of possible strategies focused on reducing purchase prices (FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016). The organizational leaders evaluated historical purchase volumes and rebates received in the past. Based on the study findings, organizational leaders initiated a strategy to renegotiate purchasing. The management contacted the top domestic suppliers with historical volume data to negotiate volume-based rebates (FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016; email communications). The action of seeking a rebate to minimize or secure market position confirmed the existing body of knowledge (Singhania, 2010). Part of the volume rebates received from the suppliers as the outcome of data-driven negotiations were offered to customers to secure commitments regarding revenues based on sustaining price positions and encouraging purchases (FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016; email communication).

Based on customer commitments, leaders initiated further negotiations with a commitment to higher volume targets to secure an additional target achievement bonus (FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016). The success achieved from top domestic suppliers drove the decision to implement the strategy across all the domestic suppliers (FT, personal communication, 05.26.2016). The current body of knowledge supports partner volume plans to be effective in supporting sales in a territory through planning and applying proper pricing policies (Juppa, 2013) and organizations emerge profitable by enhancing pricing capabilities through creating value and delivering value to the customer (Johansson, Keranen, Hinterhuber, Liozu, & Andersson, 2015).

Organizational leaders approached the international suppliers for volume driven market development funds as subsidies. The body of existing knowledge confirmed that growth oriented SMEs positively consider collaborations with larger partners to drive proactive business propositions and relationships (Perez & Cambra-Fierro, 2015). The statistics of historical purchase combined with a commitment to future purchase and the strategy of price stability and volume rebate for customers proved successful in reducing the overall purchase prices from international suppliers (FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016).

The findings supported the existing body of knowledge which indicates that rebate contracts with manufacturers are effective in driving purchase costs lower (Graf, 2014). The strategic direction aligns with the conceptual framework of organizations continuously creating value as defined as innovation and learning perspectives in BSC (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). The organization through market intelligence created a value proposition to reduce the purchase price by committing higher purchase volumes to their suppliers and offered price stability to secure higher revenue for their customers, which supports the existing body of knowledge that indicates that organizations engage in high collaborate efforts with partners towards achieving superior performance (Iyer, Srivastava, & Rawwas, 2014).

Process restructure. Evaluating the route plans for goods delivery, organizational leaders analyzed the high traffic congestion time-periods, high traffic congestion areas, and outstation dispatch time to redefine their delivery schedules and processes. From the findings, the delivery vehicles changed operating times based on the region and area of delivery to avoid traffic congestion, which then proved effective in reducing distribution costs (FT, personal communication, 05.26.2016). This process restructuring benefitted the organization in increasing the number of deliveries and fuel savings, which reduced vehicle running costs (FT, personal communication, 05.26.2016). Furthermore, the increase in numbers of deliveries enhanced customer satisfaction as customers received goods within a shorter lead time while the higher movement of daily average goods resulted in a faster turnaround of organizational inventory (FT, personal communication, 05.26.2016).

In addition, the sales order booking process aligned with the delivery route plan (FT, personal communication, 05.26.2016). Compliance of sales order booking to the delivery route plan saved a considerable amount of vehicle movement, bringing in further reductions in logistics and transportation costs (FT, personal communication, 05.26.2016). Investigating deeper into the international shipping and logistics processes, organizational leaders realized that their international suppliers had lower shipping tariffs due to the overall volume commitments in the region. Thus, routing the shipments through these contracted shippers resulted in savings of overall shipping costs (FT, personal communication, 05.26.2016). The findings supported the existing body of knowledge, which suggested that organizations optimize knowledge management to create an environment that eases the knowledge replication within the organizations (Jasimuddin & Zhang, 2014). The strategic direction aligns with the conceptual framework of this study of organizations continuously attempting to deliver value defined as customer perspectives in BSC (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). Through their geographical transportation knowledge, organizational leaders created a value proposition to enhance the delivery and service performance, and cost optimizing for organizations.

Commercial terms restructure. Decline in overall business due to declining purchasing power impacted the accounts receivables negatively (FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016). Customer delayed payments resulted in adverse cash flow situation to the organization (FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016). The organization was compelled to consider bank borrowings, which lead to incurring additional financing costs (FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016). To mitigate the additional financing costs, the organization profiled customers based on their purchase volumes. Seventy percent of the prudent customers were offered options of cash discounts and on time payment bonuses (FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016). The bottom 30% customers were advised to purchase goods on cash or stagger purchase based on weekly requirements, enabling affordable transactions (FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016).

Further, the suppliers were advised about the date and process for invoice submission and payment windows to manage the cash cycle efficiently (FT, personal communication, 05.26.2016). These findings supported the existing body of knowledge, which indicated cash flow management and cultivating business relationships are a means for enhancing stronger working capital management that has a direct influence on organizational profitability (Guni, 2014). Managing the working capital by increasing the efficiency in inventory management, reducing the accounts receivable time, and increasing the accounts payable times were effective in increasing profitability for the organizations (Enqvist et al., 2014). The strategic direction aligns with a conceptual framework of organizations continuously attempting to manage the financial perspectives found in the BSC (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). The organization, through their customer profiling, created cash discounts and staggered sales propositions to enhance cash flow to mitigate any external borrowing pressure.

Emergent Theme 2: Revenue Increasing Strategies

The organizations experienced a decline in revenues due to a decline in purchasing power during the stated inflationary period (PE, personal communication, 05.25.2016; FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016). The body of knowledge confirms that a surge in prices impacts net consumers (Huang, Funing, & He, 2013). Leaders considered strategies for increasing revenue as a means to sustain growth and to mitigate cost impact (PE, personal communication, 05.25.2016; FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016). The existing body of knowledge confirms revenue management is an effective tool in managing profitability (Zatta & Kolisch, 2014). The two organizations had different approaches to revenue increasing strategies. One organization considered increasing revenue from their existing base through rebates and target achievement bonuses (Reflective journal notes, FT, 05.26.2016) while the other considered exploring new markets for their existing products (Reflective journal notes PE, 05.29.2016). Both the organizations focused on direct customer engagements as primary mediums to execute their plans (Reflective journal notes, PE, 05.29.2016; Reflective journal notes, FT, 05.26.2016).

Table 5

Revenue Enhancement Activities

Participant Answers	Number	Percentage of Total
New Market Penetration	1	50%
Rebates and Bonus offer	1	50%
Period Based Price Contracts	1	50%

The approach to the market was different with each of the organization based on their industry dynamics. The education institute considered expanding into untapped markets segments (Reflective journal notes, PE, 05.29.2016) while, the foodstuff company considered increasing the yield from the existing customer base (Reflective journal notes, FT, 05.26.2016). Both the approaches were effective as the educational institute was able to increase their revenue by 15% to 20% (PE, personal communication, 06.02.2016) while the foodstuff company was able to increase their revenue by 17% (FT, personal communication, 05.29.2016).

The findings supported the existing body of knowledge, which indicates business innovators often focus on creating new products and markets (Soliman, 2012). Further, businesses strive to evolve within the business environment and, therefore, it is important to develop views beyond the traditional means of performing through core capabilities and structures within an operating industry (Soliman, 2012).

New market penetration. Leaders countered the decline of revenues from the large corporate sectors by penetrating to Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) sectors and regional expansions (PE, personal communication, 05.29.2016). The education institute has been concentrating on the large corporate segment in the past and had built a strong customer base within this sector. Their operations and products aligned to cater to the large enterprises and overlooked the potential in SME segments (PE, reflective journal notes, 05.29.2016). The reduction in training and development expenses by the large corporates during the period, impacted the organization's revenue stream (PE, personal communication, 05.25.2016).

The reviews and analysis directed leadership actions towards diversifying to other market segments. The organizational leaders did not have the insights or the time to build new products; they considered modifying existing products to suit the new markets (PE, personal communication, 06.02.2016). This approach confirms the existing body of knowledge regarding market development strategies where organizational leaders use existing products to penetrate new markets (Nagayoshi, 2015). For example, business schools in the United Kingdome used similar strategies as opportunities for growth to overcome the challenges posted by economic conditions (Curtis & Samy, 2014).

The organizational leaders in this study approached new markets directly through their existing sales forces. The organization used the sales route as the primary go-to-market strategy, which was supported by digital and social media marketing activities (PE, personal communication, 05.29.2016). The strategy of organizational leaders driving a sales lead market penetration supported by marketing was confirmed as effective in the existing body of knowledge as noted by Jurecka (2013). Based on this strategy, the sales forces developed probing questionnaires and sales propositions to attract SME customers (PE, personal communication, 05.29.2016).

The importance of establishing value addition in terms of relationship building in B2B context was also confirmed within the existing body of knowledge (Battaglia et al., 2015). Further, the organization moved into regional markets ahead of schedule to be able to capture new opportunities (PE, personal communication, 05.29.2016). The strategy was successful as these new markets contributed positively to revenue growth and the sales forces were able to build loyalty with the new customers to achieve and sustain 70%-80% repeat business (PE, personal communication, 06.02.2016).

These findings supported the existing body of knowledge, which indicates that salespersons are an important resource for the organization as salespersons increase revenue through a process of creating value for customers (Blocker et al., 2012). The strategic direction aligns with the conceptual framework of organizations continuously attempt innovate keeping customer perspective as defined in the BSC (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). Moreover, the organizational leaders modified the existing products to suit new market segments, thus creating value for penetration.

Rebates and bonus offer. The decreasing purchasing power and increasing costs were common for the customers of the foodstuff company (FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016). Hence, any increase in price would have had a negative impact on the sale of goods. The customers were looking for price stability and a potential reduction in the cost of goods purchased from the company (FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016).

The strategy of sharing the rebates received from the suppliers and offering them to the customers as well as sharing a target achievement bonus through a defined program proved effective for company profitability and sustainability (FT, personal communication, 05.2016; email communications). The rebate scheme facilitated the customers not to increase prices as through rebates; the retailer was able to maintain the existing prices for the products (FT, personal communication, 05.26.2016). Sustaining prices influenced the drive for higher sales, which benefited in terms of securing additional bonuses to increase profitability (FT, personal communication, 05.26.2016). Through this program, customers were able to increase their sales and consumption, which translated towards revenue increases for the organization (FT, personal communication, 05.26.2016; email communication).

The existing body knowledge supported these actions as organizations consider price-volume agreements as a means to reduce prices within the existing market (Zhang, Zaric, & Huang, 2011) and promotions and discounts to be effective in driving sales up (Roy, Chan, & Cheema, 2014). The strategic direction aligns with the conceptual framework of organizations continuously attempt to deliver value defined as customer perspectives in the BSC (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). The organizations, through their rebates and bonuses, created a value proposition to sustain prices and enhance performance. Further, the program considered the interest of customers in terms of cost that translates to revenue growth.

Period base contracts. The consistency in supply was the key to achieving vendor defined volume targets to sustain price and profits constancy (FT, reflective journal notes, 05.26.2016). A strategy of a biannual price contract with the suppliers proved effective for the organization (FT, personal communication, 05.26.2016). Through price contracts, customers were locked in for the 6-month purchases, while customers were benefited in their inventory and sales planning (FT, personal communication, 05.26.2016).

Initially, the organization experienced resistance from their customers regarding these contracts, but through explaining the bilateral benefits and positive experience within a short period for the customers, it was evident that the program was a success for the organization (FT, personal communication, 05.26.2016). The findings supported the existing body of knowledge, which indicates strategic alliances with suppliers contribute toward mitigating business challenges and improves organization profitability and sustainability (Cordova et al., 2012). The initiative enables leaders to create economic value through understating and transforming the experience for the customer to be effective in a business-to-business sales environment (Pine, 2015). In challenging environments of price escalation, supply shortages, and deteriorating service levels, organizational leaders developing long-term strategic alliances based on mutual benefits, trusted relationships, common directions, and values are key drivers for overcoming supply challenges of cost effectiveness, and profitability (Cordova et al., 2012). The strategic direction aligns with the conceptual framework of organizations internal efficiency objective found in the BSC (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). Through this process, the organization was able to align with serving their customers through less volatility and higher stability.

The findings from both the organizations revealed that financial objectives were primary drivers of defining strategies, as organizational leaders recognized the negative impact of inflation on operational costs, as evidenced through declining revenues and profits (PE, personal communication, 05.25.2016; FT, personal communication, 05.24.2016). The strategic direction focused on revenue enhancement opportunities and cost reduction opportunities as a means to sustain profitability; this was confirmed in a review of the existing body of knowledge regarding the research topic.

The organizations within the scope of redefining the strategy to achieve the defined financial objectives considered the elements of customer interests, aligning internal processes to serve the customers efficiently, and innovating through a strategic approach regarding performance management systems as defined in the BSC (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). Through these strategies, the foodstuff company achieved a net profit growth of 4% (FT, personal communication, 05.29.2016) and the education institute was able to achieve a 15%-20% growth which was in line with their initial business plan (PE, personal communication, 06.02.2016).

Applications to Professional Practice

Optimizing the operational costs and increasing revenue are the primary findings of organizational strategic directions in an environment of escalating operational costs driven by high inflation. Kaplan and Norton (1992) argued that the financial performance of the organization is of consequence regarding operational actions. Thus, the financial objectives of the BSC are achieved by increasing both revenue and cost efficiencies (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). Rust et al. (2002) noted that cost reductions or revenue growth are broader measures of sustaining profitability.

The findings of this study complemented the existing body of knowledge at the macro level. Although the fundamentals approach to strategic directions was the same, leadership's choice of strategic actions differed based on the industry. It can be stated that the findings from the study have the potential to facilitate improvements in business practices for present and future business managers. The business manager might consider (a) downsizing the facility, (b) restructuring manpower, (c) reducing purchase cost, (d) restructuring processes, (e) restructuring commercial terms, (f) penetrating new markets with existing products, and (g) increasing business yield by collaboration and commitments as options in a strategic planning process to sustain profitability in an escalating operational costs environment that is driven by higher inflation.

Business managers have the option of considering cost reduction strategies and revenue enhancing strategies in isolation or in tandem. The study revealed that organizational leaders consider the option to reduce fixed costs and variable costs as the primary means to increase cost efficiencies; however, the cost contribution factors in the cost structure drove the decision of one organization to use fixed cost reduction and the other to use variable cost reduction.

For the education institute, the facilities and the workforce were major cost contributors and the leaders decided to optimize the same while the foodstuff company's costs primary costs were merchandise inventory and leaders decided to drive strategies based on reducing those costs. The findings suggested the importance of business leaders analyzing the situation in detail to understand the high impact areas to focus on. Formulating a strategic direction without an in-depth understanding of the situation, failing to consider unanticipated results, or following the practice of another organization may not prove effective as cost structures and cost drivers of each organization vary based on business models. This was evident with the two organizations in this study, where each had different cost structures driven by the respective business models. Organizational leaders should consider cost reduction or cost optimization strategies based on their business models.

Information sources and resources play a critical role in organizational leadership deciding a strategic direction. The findings of the two case studies revealed one organization pursuing with fixed cost reduction opportunities while the other opting for the reduction in cost of goods purchased. Through data analysis, organizational leaders considered innovation and learning objectives as other means to drive cost efficiencies (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). It is evident that the direction of formulating the strategies was unique for each organization.

Both organizations used revenue increase as the means to manage profitability. Organizational leadership considered optimizing current markets and existing products as strategies for revenue enhancement. One organization considered optimizing existing products within current markets, while the other organization considered penetrating new markets with their existing products. The strategic direction of organizational leaders supported the market development strategies of using existing products to penetrate new markets, and market penetration strategies to maximize the revenue from existing markets as noted by Nagayoshi (2015). The study further revealed that both organizational leaderships did not consider product development strategies by attempting to develop new products for the existing markets or new products for new markets as defined by Nagayoshi. Their decision to move in these respective directions is based on their analysis of market potentials, common interests between the customers and suppliers, and the long lead-time demand for developing new products.

Offering existing products to new markets can be effective for an organization with the expertise and resources built around the product offerings. The time to market is very short and the organization compensated for declining revenue within the existing markets. Further, the risk of financial losses is minimal as there is no additional cost burden of product development and new product launching incurred in this process. Modification to business models and processes are needed when considering penetration of new markets.

Exploring deeper into the existing markets with innovative offerings can be effective, as organizations are able to move faster in their known territory without the need of additional expertise or resources. As revealed in the study, organizations must build attractive value propositions that are lucrative for customers. This strategy was effective with FT as organization leaders were able to build value proposition through rebates and period based pricing policies. The organizational leaders achieved internal efficiency objectives by reaching excellence through optimizing critical processes and competencies that align with serving customer needs as discussed by Kaplan and Norton (1992). The optimized processes included delivery processes, cash cycle, vertical integration of rebate flow, the merger of management roles, and refreshing human resource positions with fresh resources.

Innovation and learning objectives are parameters that are critical for competitive success (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). The innovation and learning processes contributed towards the understanding of decline demands, the importance of price stability without compromise to gross profits, and opportunities collaborative with market development activities. Thus, organizational leaders were able to develop new products, create additional value for customers, and improve operating efficiencies to drive competitiveness that translates into revenue and margin growth as noted by Kaplan and Norton.

Based on the study findings, practicing present and future managers could consider strategies of revenue enhancement and cost optimization options based on the organizational cost structures, product offerings, market potentials, and market sentiments to sustain profitability in an environment of escalating operational costs. Managers can consider the time-to-market, resource availability, and risk elements before defining any strategic direction (Williams & Kersten, 2013). The consideration of the four performance measuring elements that align with stakeholder objectives, customer objectives, internal efficiencies objectives, and value creation and learning objectives, as defined by Kaplan and Norton, (1992) are recommended when defining strategies. Well-defined strategies have the potential to yield desired financial performance to the organizations (Taylor, 2013).

Implications for Social Change

In this study, I provide a platform for business managers to develop strategic directions in managing their businesses profitably within challenging market conditions. The findings suggest the possible options of restructuring organizational human resources with minimum downsizing strategies. The findings of this study can help business managers understand the uniqueness of individual organizational structures and their relative business models that take into account the different cost structures and marketing capabilities of the company. Understanding these elements is critical for leaders to develop effective business strategies. Organizational managers should not follow or benchmark the practices of other organizations without an in-depth understanding of business models, market dynamics, value propositions, and competition that may be unique to a company. Rather, leaders should consider their own organizational business model, cost structure, customer value propositions, and market dynamics as the basis for strategy development. Further, the findings of this study may provide insights for business managers to attain business growth. Organizational business growth can contribute positively to society by creating employment opportunities, contributing to shareholder value, and add to the positive direction of the economy of a country (Insah, Mumuni, & Bangiyel, 2013). My study provides a strategic development framework for business managers to satisfy shareholders, employees, and nations in challenging business environments as skilled human resources drive business success (Ployhart, Nyberg, Reilly, & Maltarich, 2014).

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies business managers used to maintain profitability with rising operating costs. Economic inflation affects the financial performance of organizations (N'cho-Oguie et al., 2011). Business managers can draw reference to this study finding as a guideline for developing strategic direction to sustain organizational profitability in volatile economic conditions. Based on the study findings, business leaders could have periodical reviews with organizational teams to measure financial performance, as the organizational leaders in this study addressed declining revenue and profitability through monthly and quarterly business performance reviews.

A leader leading a periodical review meeting can see symptoms of threats or opportunities for the company and can investigate and then understand the root causes of the observed symptoms; much like the organizational leaders did in this study. These organizational leaders recognized the symptoms of declining revenue and profits and understood the causes as declining demand in their market segment and declining purchasing powers of consumers. The periodical meetings facilitated the knowledge management process for developing effective strategies that lead the organizational leaders towards the defined goals. Developing and managing the culture of tacit and explicit knowledge transfer within the team is critical for organizational success (Jasimuddin & Zhang, 2014).

Based on their understating, the organizational leaders investigated internal cost structures, processes, and external market conditions that translated to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to consider. Their investigation revealed the possibility of moving to other markets with minimal risk as well as renegotiating with suppliers to attain additional rebates to sustain end-user prices as opportunities while recognizing the existing skills and resources as possible strengths to leverage. These actions translated towards catering to new market segments for one organization and creating value across the supply chain for the other. Organizational leaders in this study considered internal process and learnings to define cost-restructuring opportunities to overcome weaknesses and to optimize operational efficiencies. Business managers must understand the importance of internal data, staff feedback, and customer responses when considering business strategies to enhance revenue or optimize cost structures in their respective companies. The findings align with the existing body of knowledge. The existing body of knowledge confirmed that organizations achieve higher performances when they are able to access to markets with capital, information, and technology (Kiveu & Ofafa, 2013). Further, organizations perform successfully in competitive environments when business leaders are constantly motivating a knowledge flow within the organization (Cojocariu & Stanciu, 2012) and are skilled in gathering market information to understand the needs the customers (Bengesi & Roux, 2014).

The approach to different cost optimizing options and revenue enhancing options based on historical data and business dynamics provide good insights for approaching strategic development processes. I will publish my study for interested individuals, as the findings can be useful for not only business managers in the United Arab Emirates but also business managers across the Gulf region. The study findings further can be a base for developing management training, strategy workshops, and business conference.

Recommendations for Further Study

Time and scope were the primary limitations for this study. The time limitation translates into limitations of sample size, while the scope limitation translates to geographic limitations, which in this case was confined to the city of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. Future researchers can expand with a larger sample size, as this study was limited to two organizations and expand research to other cities in the Gulf region. Further, future researchers could focus on a single industry sector such as trading or services to obtain deeper understanding regarding individual sectors' management strategic options and reactions to challenging economic situations. I viewed this study through the lens of financial, customer, processes, and learning perspectives only and, therefore, future researchers could focus on leadership styles of managing a business in challenging economic conditions. Further, future researchers can extend the scope to include other study methods and designs other than case studies design.

Reflections

The doctoral study process has been a great learning experience. The process has given me different perspectives in viewing and analyzing a problem. Further, this has enhanced my knowledge and approach to the organizational leadership strategic development process. I was conscious of my personal lens on the subject and, therefore, mitigated my personal bias with the use of interview protocols and member checking strategies as discussed by Dibley (2011). I used the interview protocol (Appendix E) as a guide and controlled my reactions during the interviews.

The study changed my perceptions as to how organizations view situations to develop strategies to increase revenue and reduce costs. I found it enlightening to see the approach towards exploring opportunities with vendors and customers to increase revenue while enhancing profitability. Further, it was refreshing to see a real world restructuring of an organization's human resource development through replacing personnel with different skill levels. I was happy to see a different outcome than what I anticipated.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies business managers use to maintain profitability with rising operating costs. I selected two organizations, one operating in trading and the other in the services industry from the city of Dubai, based on a purposive sample method for data collection. I collected the primary data through semistructured interviews of two senior business managers from each of the organizations. The data was then methodologically triangulated with interviews of two of the junior managers from each organization using a semistructured focus group interview process and my review of nonsensitive company document artifacts. The data were saturated when there were no new or thematic codes found from the data as discussed by Morse et al. (2014).

The findings from the study clearly indicate the importance of information and feedback for developing organizational strategies; however, different strategic directions need to be adopted and based on the unique business models and market dynamics for each industry. The primary consideration is one being able to understand the industry in which the business operates and primary drivers of costs revenues streams. Understanding the costs streams can direct the focus on key cost optimizing areas while understanding different revenue terms within the existing customer base and new customer base can present opportunities for revenue growth.

Revenue enhancement and cost optimization can be the route to attaining organizational profitability. The company approach and options for achieving these goals will differ based on the organization's business model, cost structures, market dynamics, and resource availability. Further organizations can mitigate their weaknesses and leverage their strengths to realize market opportunities while avoiding higher investment risks in unexplored domains. In challenging economic conditions, organizational leaders should focus on strategies that can yield high returns with less effort.

References

Acharyulu, G. V. R. K. (2012). Leveraging customer relationship management (CRM) in corporate hospital supply chain. *IUP Journal of Supply Chain Management, 9*, 72-87. Retrieved from http://www.iupindia.in/supplychain_management.asp

Alimpic, Z. (2013). New growth platform framework for Swiss acute hospitals - An empirical study for the development of dynamic capabilities. *Serbian Journal of Management, 8*, 185-199. doi:10.5937/sjm8-4431

Al sharif, A., & Qin, R. (2015). Double-sided price adjustment flexibility with a preemptive right to exercise. *Annals of Operations Research, 226*(1), 29-50. doi:10.1007/s10479-014-1659-6

Alsoboa, S. S., & Aldehayyat, J. (2013). The impact of competitive business strategies on managerial accounting techniques: A study of Jordanian public industrial companies. *International Journal of Management, 30*, 545-555. Retrieved from http://www.theijm.com

Anderson, S. W., & Lillis, A. M. (2011). Corporate frugality: Theory, measurement, and practice. *Contemporary Accounting Research, 28*, 1349-1387. doi:10.1111/j.1911-3846.2011.01107.x

Arseven, I. (2014). A study design using qualitative methods for program evaluation. *International Journal of Academic Research, 6*, 417-422. doi:10.7813/20754124.2014/6-1/B.56

Atkinson, M. J., Tally, S., Heichel, C. W., Kozak, I., Leich, J., & Levack, A. (2012). A qualitative investigation of visual tasks with which to assess distance-specific visual function. *Quality of Life Research*, *22*, 437-453. doi:10.1007/s11136-012-0154-2

Atrek, B., Marcone, M., Gregori, G., Temperini, V., & Moscatelli, L. (2014). Relationship quality in supply chain management: A dyad perspective. *Ege Academic Review, 14*, 371-381. Retrieved from http://www.eab.ege.edu.tr

Awad, G. (2014). Motivation, persistence, and crosscultural awareness: A study of college students learning foreign languages. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, *18*(4), 97-116. Retrieved from http://www.alliedacademies.org

Baker, T., Jayaraman, V., & Ashley, N. (2013). A data-driven inventory control policy for cash logistics operations: An exploratory case study application at a financial institution. *Decision Sciences*, *44*, 205-226. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5915.2012.00389.x

Banos-Caballero, S., Garcia-Teruel, P. J., & Martinez-Solano, P. (2014). Working capital management, corporate performance, and financial constraints. *Journal of Business Research*, *67*, 332-338. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2013.01.016.

Bansal, P., & Corley, K. (2011). The coming of age for qualitative research: Embracing the diversity of qualitative methods. *Academy of Management Journal*, *54*, 233-237. doi:10.5465/AMJ.2011.60262792

Battaglia, D., Schimith, C. D., Marciano, M. A., Bittencourt, S. A. M., Diesel, L., Borchardt, M., & Pereira, G. M. (2015). Value added elements according to buyer companies in a B2B context. *Brazilian Administration Review, 12*, 229-249. doi:10.1590/1807-7692bar2015150005

Bengesi, K. M. K., & Roux, I. L. (2014). Strategic entrepreneurial response of small and medium enterprises in development economies. *International Journal of Business and Management, 9*, 153-165. doi:10.5539/ijbm.v9n2p153

Baxter, D. I., Goffin, K., & Szwejczewski, M. (2014). The repertory grid technique as a customer insight method. *Research Technology Management*, *57*(4), 35-42. doi:10.5437/08956308X5704229

Bell, J. E., Mollenkopf, D. A., & Stolze, H. J. (2013). Natural resource scarcity and the closed-loop supply chain: A resource-advantage view. *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management, 43*, 351-379. doi:10.1108/IJPDLM-03-2012-0092

Berber, N., Pasula, M., Radosevic, M., Ikonov, D., & Vugdelija, V. K. (2012). Internal audit of compensations and benefits: Tasks and risks in production systems. *Engineering Economics*, *23*, 414-424. doi:10.5755/j0I.ee.23.4.l 143.

Bhasin, J., & Parrey, A. H. (2013). Correlating business process management and organizational performance: A case study of J&K Bank. *IUP Journal of Organizational Behavior, 12*, 21-32. Retrieved from www.iupindia.in

Blocker, C. P., Cannon, J. P., Panagopoulos, N. G., & Sager, J. K. (2012). The role of the sales force in value creation and appropriation: New directions for research.

Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 32, 15-28. doi:10.2753/PSS0885-3134320103

Blossom, J. (2014). The signal economy: How to target new revenues through predictive analytics. *Information Services & Use, 34*, 17-25. doi:10.3233/ISU-140724

Boesch, I., Schwaninger, M., Weber, M., & Scholz, R. W. (2013). Enhancing validity and reliability through feedback-driven exploration: A study in the context of conjoint analysis. *Systemic Practice and Action Research, 26*, 217-238. doi:10.1007/s11213-012-9248-6.

Brutus, S., Gill, H., & Duniewicz, K. (2010). State of science in industrial and organizational psychology: A review of self-reported limitations. *Personnel Psychology, 63*, 907-936. doi:10.1111/j.1744-6570.2010. 01192.x

Butts, M. M., Becker, W. J., & Boswell, W. R. (2015). Hot buttons and time sinks: The effects of electronic communication during nonwork time on emotions and work-nonwork conflict. *Academy of Management Journal, 58*, 763-788. doi:10.5465/amj.2014.0170

Campbell, J. L., Quincy, C., Osserman, J., & Pedersen, O. K. (2013). Coding in-depth semistructured interviews: Problems of unitization and intercoder reliability and agreement. *Sociological Methods & Research, 42*, 294-320. doi:10.1177/0049124113500475

Caniato, F., Golini, R., & Kalchschmidt, M. (2013). The effect of global supply chain configuration on the relationship between supply chain improvement programs and performance. *International Journal of Production Economics, 143,* 285-293. doi:10.1016/j.ijpe.2012.05.019

Carter, M. Z., & Findley, H. (2012). A study of original equipment manufacturers in China: Current and future trends. *Journal of Management Policy and Practice*, *13*(4), 102-116. Retrieved from http://www.na-businesspress.com/jmppopen

CBRE Global Research and Consultancy. (2014). Dubai office and market view Q2 2014. Retrieved from http://www.cbre.ae/uae_en/research

Chen, C. W., Chiang, M. H., & Yang, C. L. (2014). New Product preannouncement, advertising investments, and stock returns. *Marketing Letters*, *25*, 207-217. doi:10.1007/s11002-013-9253-2

Chiu, M., & Kremer, G. (2014). An investigation on centralized and decentralized supply chain scenarios at the product design stage to increase performance. *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management, 61*, 114-128. doi:10.1109/TEM.2013.2246569

Ciciretti, R., Hasan, I., & Waisman, M. (2015). Distribution strategy and movie performance: An empirical note. *Eurasian Economic Review*, *5*, 179-187. doi:10.1007/s40822-015-0023-8

Clarke, J. E., Tamaschke, R., & Liesch, P. W. (2013). Internal experience in international business research: A conceptualization and exploration of key themes.

International Journal of Management Reviews, *15*, 265-279. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2370.2012.00338.x

Cojocariu, A., & Stanciu, C. O. (2012). Intelligent technologies for knowledge discovery. *Annals: Economic Science Series, 18*(2), 8-13. Retrieved from https://www.ceeol.com

Cordova, F., Duran, C., Sepulveda, J., Fernandez, A., & Rojas, M. (2012). A proposal of logistic services innovation strategy for a mining company. *Journal of Technology Management & Innovation*, *7*, 175-185. doi:110.4067/S0718-27242012000100012.

Corrigan, H. B., Craciun, G., & Powell, A. M. (2014). How does target know so much about its customers? Utilizing customer analytics to make marketing decisions. *Marketing Education Review*, *24*, 159-166. doi:10.2753/MER1052-8008240206

Crowe, S., Cresswell, K., Robertson, A., Huby, G., Avery, A., & Sheik, A. (2011). The case study approach. *BMC Medical Research Methodology, 11*(100), 1-9 doi:10.1186/1471-2288-11-100

Crump, B., & Peter, R. (2014). A case for non-profit organizations to engage in the use of shared computing services. *Electronic Journal of Information Systems Evaluation, 17*(1), 15-22. Retrieved from http://www.ejise.com

Curtis, L., & Samy, M. (2014). Investigating whether UK business schools need to be more business-like in order to survive in today's dynamic environment.

International Journal of Educational Management, *28*, 728-750. doi:10.1108/IJEM-08-2013-0133

Dana, J., Dawes, R., & Peterson, N. (2013). Belief in the unstructured interview: The persistence of an illusion. *Judgment and Decision Making, 8,* 512-520. Retrieved from http://journal.sjdm.org

Das, S. S. (2012). Understanding hidden factors that influence costs of arc welding operations. *Advances in Production Engineering & Management*, *7*, 213-224. doi:10.14743/apem2012.4.143

de Faria, A. C., Soares, I. C., Rocha, W., & Bedinelli Rossi, G. (2013). The adoption of interorganizational cost management in a vehicle assembly plant in the greater region of ABC. *Revista Brasileira De Gestão De Negócios, 15*, 617-638. doi:10.7819/rbgn.v15i49.1228

Diaconu, L. (2012). The development of the low-cost carriers' business models. Southwest Airlines case study. *Economic Sciences, 59*, 231-238. doi:10.2478/v10316-012-0016-7

Dibley, L. (2011). Analyzing narrative data using McCormack's lenses. *Nurse Researcher*, *18*(3), 13-19. doi:10.7748/nr2011.04.18.3.13.c8458

Dilshad, R. M., & Latif, M. I. (2013). Focus group interview as a tool for qualitative research: An analysis. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences, 33*, 191-198. Retrieved from http://www.bzu.edu.pk

Dolgui, A., & Proth, J. (2013). Outsourcing: Definitions and analysis. *International Journal of Production Research*, *51*, 6769-6777. doi:10.1080/00207543.2013.855338

Doody, O., & Noonan, M. (2013). Preparing and conducting interviews to collect data. *Nurse Researcher*, *20*(5), 28-32. doi:10.7748/nr2013.05.20.5.28.e327.

Dooley, L. M. (2002). Case study research and theme building. *Advance in Developing Human Resources, 4,* 335-354. doi:10.1177/1523422302043007

Dorisz, T. (2014). Analysis of working capital management of leading companies in the Hungarian dairy sector between 2008 and 2012. *Annals of the University of Oradea, Economic Science Series*, *23*, 948-958. Retrieved from www.anale.steconomiceuoradea.ro/en

Dowden, A. R., Gunby, J. D., Warren, J. M., & Boston, Q. (2014). A phenomenological analysis of invisibility among African-American males: Implications for clinical practice and client retention. *Professional Counsellor, 4,* 58-70. doi:10.15241/ard.4.1.58

Drahokoupil, J. (2014). Decision-making in multinational corporations: Key issues in international business strategy. *European Review of Labor & Research, 20,* 199-215. doi:10.1177/1024258914525563

Draper, A. A., & Swift, J. A. (2011). Qualitative research in nutrition and dietetics: Data collection issues. *Journal of Human Nutrition & Dietetics, 24,* 3-12. doi:10.1111/j.1365-277X.2010.01117.x

Drell, L., & Davis, J. (2014). Measure for measure. *Marketing Insights*, *26*(5), 22-27. Retrieved from www.ama.org

Dubai FDI, Department of Economic Development. (2012). Dubai FDI bring out new why Dubai study to update investors worldwide [Press release]. Retrieved from http://dubaifdi.gov.ae/en/NewsEvents/Press/Pages/Dubai-FDI-bring-out-new-Why-Dubai-study-to-update-investors-worldwide--.aspx

Dubey, R. (2013). Nanotechnology in building materials: A case of ACC limited. *International Journal of Innovation Science*, *5*(3), 179-202. doi:10.1260/1757-2223.5.3.179

Efendi, J., Kinney, M. R., Smith, K. T., & Smith, L. P. (2013). Marketing supply chain using B2B buy-side ecommerce systems: Does adoption impact financial performance? *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal*, *17*(2), 57-83. Retrieved from http://www.alliedacademies.org/public/journals/JournalDetails.aspx

Ellickson, P. B., Misra, S., & Nair, H. S. (2012). Repositioning dynamics and pricing strategy. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *49*, 750-772. doi:10.1509/jmr.11.0068

Ellram, L. M., Tate, W. L., & Feitzinger, E. G. (2013). Factor-market rivalry and competition for supply chain resources. *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, *49*(1), 29-46. Retrieved from http://www.ism.ws/Pubs/Journalscm/index.cfm

Enqvist, J., Graham, M., & Nikkinen, J. (2014). The impact of working capital management on firm's profitability in different business cycles: Evidence from

Finland. *Research in International Business and Finance, 32*, 36-49. doi:10.1016/j.ribaf.2014.03.005

Everington, J. (2014, March 19). UAE employers pressured to raise housing allowances. *The National*. Retrieved from http://www.thenational.ae

Fein, E. C., & Kulik, C. T. (2011). Safeguarding access and safeguarding meaning as strategies for achieving confidentiality. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice, 4*, 479-481. doi:10.1111/j.1754-9434.2011.01378

Fujimoto, T., & Park, Y.W. (2014). Balancing supply chain competitiveness and robustness through “virtual dual sourcing”: Lessons from the Great East Japan Earthquake. *International Journal of Production Economics, 147*, 429-436. doi:10.1016/j.ijpe.2013.07.012

Ghezzi, A. (2013). Revisiting business strategy under discontinuity. *Management Decision, 51*, 1326-1358. doi:10.1108/MD-05-2012-0388

Goldsmith, C., & Cyboran, S. F. (2013). Reducing suboptimal employee decisions can build the business case for employee benefits. *Benefits Quarterly, 29*(1), 15-31. Retrieved from www.iscebs.org

Goode, S., Shailer, G., Wilson, M., & Jankowski, J. (2014). Gifting and status in virtual worlds. *Journal of Management Information Systems, 31*, 171-210. doi:10.2753/MIS0742-1222310207

Govindan, K., & Popiuc, M.N. (2014). Reverse supply chain coordination by revenue sharing contract: A case for the personal computers industry. *European Journal of Operational Research, 233*, 326-336. doi:10.1016/j.ejor.2013.03.023

Graf, J. (2014). The effects of rebate contracts on the health care system. *The European Journal of Health Economics: HEPAC, 15,* 477-487. doi:10.1007/s10198-013-0488-x

Griensven, H. V., Moore, A. P., & Hall, V. (2014). Mixed method research-The best of both worlds? *Manual Therapy, 19*, 367-371. doi:10.1016/j.math.2014.05.005

Gross Domestic Product. (2013). Dubai Statistic Center. Government of Dubai. Retrieved from http://www.dsc.gov.ae/EN/Themes/Pages/Reports.aspx

Guni, C. N. (2014). Changing the market strategy by cost management. *Economics, Management & Financial Markets, 9,* 440-447. Retrieved from http://www.addletonacademicpublishers.com

Gwin, C., & VanHoose, D. D. (2012). Price and wage stickiness, inflation and profits. *Manchester School, 80*, 263-278. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9957.2011.02241.x

Harper, M., & Cole, P. (2012). Member checking: Can benefits be gained similar to group therapy? *Qualitative Report*, *17*, 510-517. Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu

Honan, E. (2014). Disrupting the habit of interviewing. *Reconceptualizing Educational Research Methodology, 5*(1), 1-17. doi:10.7677/rerm.929

HR Observer, The. (2014, June 16). From flexible benefits to cost of living: Delegates debate hottest C&B topics [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://blog.thehrobserver.com/from-flexible-benefits-to-cost-of-living-delegates-debate-hottest-cb-topics

Hsu, S. H., & Lee, J. (2012). Timing of sale, pricing, and cost information: evidence from the airline industry. *Accounting Perspectives, 11*, 197-209. doi:10.1111/j.1911-3838.2012.00039.x

Huang, C., Funing, Z., & He, J. (2013). Income vs price subsidy: Policy options to help the urban poor facing food price surge. *China Agricultural Economic Review, 5*(1), 89-99. doi:10.1108/17561371311294775

Hughes, A. N., Gibbons, M. M., & Mynatt, B. (2013). Using narrative career counseling with the underprepared college student. *Career Development Quarterly*, *61*(1), 40-49. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.2013.00034.x

Ibrahim, M. (2015). Investigating the use of the four perspectives of balanced scorecard (BSC) as technique for assessing performance by Nigerian banks. *Journal of Accounting and Taxation, 7*(4), 62-70. doi:10.5897/JAT2014.0148

Inflation and Consumer Price Index. (2014). Dubai Statistics Center. Government of Dubai. Retrieved from https://www.dsc.gov.ae/en-us/Publications/Pages/publication-details.aspx?PublicationId=7

Inflation and Consumer Price Index. (2015). Dubai Statistics Center. Government of Dubai. Retrieved from https://www.dsc.gov.ae/en-us/Publications/Pages/publication-details.aspx?PublicationId=7

Insah, B., Mumuni, A., & Bangiyel, P. (2013). An analysis of the determinants of business growth in Ghana: A study of Wa municipal in the Upper Western Region. *European Journal of Business and Management, 5*, 2222-2839. Retrieved from http://www.iiste.org

Issel, L. M., Olorunsaiye, C., Snebold, L., & Handler, A. (2015). Relationships among providing maternal, child, and adolescent health services; Implementing various financial strategy responses, and performance of local health departments. *American Journal of Public Health, 105*, S244-S251. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2014.302288

Iyer, K. N. S., Srivastava, P., & Rawwas, M. Y. A. (2014). Aligning supply chain relational strategy with the market environment: Implications for operational performance. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 22*(1), 53-72. doi:10.2753/MTP1069-6679220104

Jablonski, B., & Kuczowic, J. (2015). Microeconomic and macroeconomic determinants of the dividend policy in companies quoted at Warsaw stock exchange - Research results. *Ekonomia i Prawo, 14*, 443-457. doi:10.12775/EiP.2015.029

Jasimuddin, S. M., & Zhang, Z. (2014). Knowledge management strategy and organizational culture. *Journal of the Operational Research Society, 65*, 1490-1500. doi:10.1057/jors.2013.101

Jasinavicius, R., & Jasinavicius, N. (2011). Strengthening enterprise competitiveness by synchronizing supply chain. *Business Theory & Practice*, *12*, 341-347. doi:10.3846/btp.2011.35

Jayaraman, K., Kee, T. L., & Soh, K. L. (2012). The perceptions and perspectives of lean six sigma (LSS) practitioners. *TQM Journal*, *24*, 433-446. doi:10.1108/17542731211261584

Johnson, D. S., Clark, B. H., & Barczak, G. (2012). Customer relationship management processes: How faithful are business-to-business firms to customer profitability? *Industrial Marketing Management, 41*, 1094-1105. doi:10.1016/j.indmarman.2012.04.001

Johnson, J. S., & Friend, S. B. (2015). Contingent cross-selling and up-selling relationships with performance and job satisfaction: An MOA-theoretic examination. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 35*(1), 51-71. doi:10.1080/08853134.2014.940962

Johansson, M., Keranen, J., Hinterhuber, A., Liozu, S., & Andersson, L. (2015). Value assessment and pricing capabilities-how to profit from value. *Journal of Revenue and Pricing Management*, *14*, 178-197. doi:10.1057/rpm.2015.8

Jen-Ming, C., & Chun-Yun, K. (2013). Channel strategy and pricing in a dual-channel with competition. *International Journal of Electronic Business Management, 11*, 258-267. Retrieved from www.ijebm-ojs.ie.nthu.edu.tw

Juppa, V. (2013). Managerial guidelines for market penetration and expansion: A case study of a medical devices manufacturer. *Central European Business Review, 2*(2), 45-50. doi:10.18267/j.cebr.45

Jurecka, P. (2013). Strategy and portfolio management aspects of integrated business planning. *Central European Business Review*, *2*(1), 28-34. doi:10.18267/j.cebr.36

Kaplan R. S., & Norton, D. P. (1992, January/February). The balanced scorecard-Measures that drive performances. *Harvard Business Review*, 70-79. Retrieved from https://hbr.org

Kaur, M. (2015). Bank selection process and market segmentation: Evidence from Indian exporting SMEs. *Vision*, *19*(2), 79-88. doi:10.1177/0972262915575650

Khan, A. A. (2014). Qualitative research: A case for a multi-angle view to enhance 'validity'. *International Journal of Business and Management*, *9*(9), 29-40. doi:10.5539/ijbm.v9n9p29

Khanna, P., Jones, C. D., & Boive, S. (2014). Director human capital, information processing demands, and board effectiveness. *Journal of Management*, *40*, 557-585. doi:10.1177/0149206313515523

Kiveu, M., & Ofafa, G. (2013). Enhancing market access in Kenya SMEs using ICT. *Global Business and Economics Research Journal, 2,* 29-46. Retrieved from http://www.journal.globejournal.org

Koc, E., & Burhan, H. A. (2014). An analytic hierarchy process (AHP) approach to a real world supplier selection problem: A case study of Carglass Turkey. *Global Business & Management Research, 6*, 1-14. Retrieved from www.gbmr.ioksp.com

Kodama, M. (2013). How large is the cost of business in developing countries. *Review of Development Economics, 17*, 49-63. doi:10.1111/rode.12014

Kotkin, J. (2014, August 14). The world's most influential cities. *Forbes.* Retrieved from http://www.forbes.com

Kremer, S., Bick, A., & Nautz, D. (2013). Inflation and growth: New evidence from a dynamic panel threshold analysis. *Empirical Economics, 44*, 861-878. doi:10.1007/s00181-012-0553-9

Kruger, L. P. (2012). Developing operations strategies: Reassessing the strength and importance of competitive operations priorities for South African businesses. *South African Journal of Business Management, 43*(3), 13-28. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC124097

Kumar, R., Singh, R., & Shankar, R. (2013). Study on coordination issues for flexibility in supply chain of SMEs: A case study. *Global Journal of Flexible Systems Management, 14*(2), 81-92. doi:10.1007/s40171-013-0032-y

Kumar, S., & Blair, J. T. (2013). US healthcare fix: Leveraging the lessons from the food supply chain. *Technology and Health Care, 21*, 125-141. doi:10.3233/THC130715

Lehmann, D. R. (2015). Marketing and organic revenue growth. *GfK-Marketing Intelligence Review*, *7*(1), 16-21. doi:10.1515/gfkmir-2015-0002

Lockett, A., & Wild, A. (2013). A Penrosean theory of acquisitive growth. *Business History, 55*, 790-817. doi:10.1080/00076791.2013.790370

Loffler, M., & Decker, R. (2012). Realising opportunities in the premium automotive market via context-oriented new product positioning. *Journal of Marketing Management, 28*, 716-732. doi:10.1080/0267257X.2010.543644

Li, H., Li, L., Wu, B., & Xiong, Y. (2008). The end of cheap Chinese labor. *Journal of Economic Perspective, 26*(4), 57-77. doi:10.1257/jep.26.4.57

Ling, Y. (2013). The influence of intellectual capital on organizational performance-knowledge management as moderator. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management, 30*, 937-964. doi:10.1007/s10490-011-9257-5

Lockshin, L., Cohen, E., & Zhou, X. (2011). What Influences five-star Beijing restaurants in making wine lists? *Journal of Wine Research, 22*, 227-243. doi:10.1080/09571264.2011.596200

Lowery, D. R., & Morse, W. C. (2013). A qualitative method for collecting spatial data on important places for recreation, livelihoods, and ecological meanings: Integrating focus groups with public participation geographic information systems. *Society & Natural Resources*, *26*, 1422-1437. doi:10.1080/08941920.2013.819954

Manuj, I., Omar, A., & Yazdanparast, A. (2013). The quest for competitive advantage in global supply chains: The role of interorganizational learning. *Transportation Journal 52*, 463-492. doi:10.5325/transportationj.52.4.0463

Manjuntha, K., & Bheemanagouda, P. (2013). Examination of suitability of factor endowment theory with the reflection on transportation cost in international business. *Journal of Management and Science*, *3*(4) 59-63. Retrieved from http://jms.nonolympictimes.org

Mariotto, F. L., Pinto Zanni, P., & De Moraes, G. M. (2014). What is the use of a single case study in management research? *RAE: Revista De Administração De Empresas, 54*, 358-369. doi:10.1590/S0034-759020140402

Marshall, A. (2014). Sensemaking in second life. *Procedia Technology*, *13*, 107-111. doi:10.1016/j.protcy.2014.02.014

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (2015). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Marx, T. G. (2013). Teaching leadership and strategy. *Business Education Innovation Journal*, *5*(2), 12-19. Retrieved from http://www.beijournal.com

Mariadoss, B. J., Johnson, J. L., & Martin, K. D. (2014). Strategic intent and performance: The role of resource allocation decisions. *Journal of Business Research*, *67*, 2393-2402. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2014.02.006

Martin, K., & Parmar, B. (2012). Assumptions in decision-making scholarship: Implications for business ethics research. *Journal of Business Ethics, 105*, 289-306. doi:10.1007/s10551-011-0965-z

Mboga, J. (2013). *Exploring outsourced vendor operating effectiveness and its effect on clients' objectives* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3605925)

Melnyk, S. A., Narasimhan, R., & DeCampos, H. A. (2014). Supply chain design: issues, challenges, frameworks and solutions. *International Journal of Production Research, 52*, 1887-1896. doi:10.1080/00207543.2013.787175

Michel, C. C., & Wiid, J. A. (2013). Establishing the challenges affecting South African SME's. *International Business and Economic Research Journal, 12*, 707-715. Retrieved from http://www.cluteinstitute.com

Mitchell, M. L., & Jolley, J. M. (2010). *Research design explained* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth.

Mitra, S., Hossain, M., & Jain, P. (2013). Product market power and management's action to avoid earnings disappointment. *Review of Quantitative Finance & Accounting, 41*, 585-610. doi:10.1007/s11156-012-0324-x

Morse, W. C., Lowery, D. R., & Steury, T. (2014). Exploring saturation of themes and spatial locations in qualitative public participation geographic information systems research. *Society & Natural Resources, 27*, 557-571. doi:10.1080/08941920.2014.888791

Mukherjee, T. K., & Pandit, S. (2009). Role of balance scoreboard (BBDC) in performance management. *Globsyn Management Journal, 3*(1), 50-55. Retrieved from http://www.globsyn.edu.in

Munjal, S., & Sharma, S. (2012). Applying innovative food cost management practices in inflationary times: Indian budget restaurant segment experiences. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes, 4*, 463-477. doi:10.1108/17554211211277897

Muminovic, S., & Pavlovic, V. (2012). Profitability of dairy industry in Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia, *Mljekarstvo*, *62*(2), 96-110. Retrieved from http://hrcak.srce.hr.

Nagayoshi, S. (2015). Ontological level business process change for growth strategy execution. *Journal of Management Information and Decision Sciences, 18*(2), 31-53. Retrieved from http://www.alliedacademies.org

N'cho-Oguie, C., Blakley, D. L., Murray, L. W., & Smith, M. B. (2011). Econometric analysis of functional relationship between inflation and growth of firms in South Africa: Empirical research findings. *Journal of Financial Management & Analysis, 24*(2), 1-19. Retrieved from http://gipe.ac.in:8080/W27/Result/w27AcptRslt.aspx?AID=649287&xF=T&xD=0&nS=2

Neumann, M. (2013). Rivalry between shareholder value and large size in the global economy. *Schmalenbach Business Review (SBR), 65*, 4-21. Retrieved from http://www.sbr-online.de

Nguyen, H., & Lee, Y. L. (2008). International outsourcing in emerging and developed economies: An empirical study. *Journal of International Business Research*, *7*(3) 53-62. Retrieved from http://www.alliedacademies.org

Nunez, R., & Kleiner, B. H. (2012). Development of managed healthcare in the United States: Lessons for managers. *International Journal of Management, 29*, 29-35. Retrieved from http://www.theijm.com/

Nwabueze, U. (2012). Process improvement: the case of a drugs manufacturing company. *Business Process Management Journal*, *18*, 576-584. doi:10.1108/14637151211253738

Nyberg, A. J., Moliterno, T. P., Hale, D., & Lepak, D. P. (2014). Resource-based perspectives on unit-level human capital: A review and integration. *Journal of Management*, *40*, 316-346. doi:10.1177/0149206312458703

Ok, S. T. (2011). International outsourcing: Empirical evidence from Netherlands. *Journal of Business Economics and Management 12*, 131-143. doi:10.3846/16111699.2011.555383

Oke, A., Walumbwa, F. O., & Myers, A. (2012). Innovation strategy, human resource policy, and firms' revenue growth: The roles of environmental uncertainty and innovation performance. *Decision Sciences, 43*, 273-302. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5915.2011.00350.x

Oluwatayo, J. A. (2012). Validity and reliability issues in education research. *Journal of Educational and Social Research, 2*, 391-399. doi:10.5901/jesr.2012.v2n2.391

Omar, A., Davis-Sramek, B., Myers, M. B., & Mentzer, J. T. (2012). A global analysis of orientation, coordination, and flexibility in supply chains. *Journal of Business Logistics, 33,* 128-144. doi:10.1111/j.0000-0000.2012.01045.x

Omkar, D., & Palsule-Desai (2013). Supply chain coordination using revenue-dependent revenue sharing contracts. *Omega, 41,* 780-795. doi:10.1016/j.omega.2012.10.001

Onghena, E., Meersman, H., & Voorde, E. (2014). A translog cost function of the integrated airfreight business: The case of FedEx and UPS. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice, 62,* 81-97. doi:10.1016/j.tra.2014.02.002

O'Reilly, M., & Parker, N. (2012). Unsatisfactory saturation: a critical exploration of the notion of saturated sample size in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research 13*, 190-197. doi:10.1177/1468794112446106

Oztruk, S., Sozdemir, A., & Ulger, O. (2014). The effects of inflation targeting strategy on the growing performance of developed and developing countries: Evaluation of pre and post stages of global financial crisis. *Second World Conference on Business, Economics and Management, 109*, 57-64. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.12.421

Parker, L. (2014). Qualitative perspectives: Through a methodological lens. *Qualitative Research in Accounting and Management, 11*(1), 1-17. Retrieved from http//www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/products/journals/journals.htm?id=qram

Parnell, J. A., Lester, D. L., Long, Z., & Koseoglu, M. (2012). How environmental uncertainty affects the link between business strategy and performance in SMES:

Evidence from China, Turkey, and the USA. *Management Decision, 50*, 546-568. doi:10.1108/00251741211220129

Parry, K., Mumford, M. D., Bower, I., & Watts, L. L. (2014). Qualitative and historiometric methods in leadership research: A review of the first 25 years of the leadership quarterly. *Leadership Quarterly, 25*, 132-151. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2013.11.006

Peko, G., & Ahmed, M. D. (2011). Leveraging logistics core competence for competitive advantage in commodity markets: A New Zealand case study. *New Zealand Journal of Applied Business Research, 9*(1), 11-24. Retrieved from http://nzjabr.manukau.ac.nz

Pezalla, A. E., Pettigrew, J., & Miller-Day, M. (2012). Researching the researcher-as-instrument: An exercise in interviewer self-reflexivity. *Qualitative Research*, *12*, 165-185. doi:10.1177/1468794111422107

Perez, L., & Cambra-Fierro, J. (2015). Value generation in B2B contexts: The SMEs' perspective. *European Business Review, 27*, 297-317. doi:10.1108/EBR-05-2014-0045

Pettijohn, C. E., Schaefer, A. D., & Burnett, M. S. (2014). Salesperson performance: Exploring the roles of role ambiguity, autonomy, and self-efficacy. *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal, 18*(1), 99-111. Retrieved from www.alliedacademies.org

Pine, B. J. (2015). How B2B companies create economic value by designing experiences and transformations for their customers. *Strategy & Leadership, 43*(3), 2-6. doi:10.1108/SL-03-2015-0018

Ployhart, R. E., Nyberg, A. J., Reilly, G., & Maltarich, M. A. (2014). Human capital is dead: Long live human capital resources. *Journal of Management, 40*, 371-398. doi:10.1177/0149206313512152

Prust, M. L., Clark, K., Davis, B., Pallas, S. W., Kertanis, J., O'Keefe, E., & Humphries, D. (2015). How Connecticut health directors deal with public health budget cuts at the local level. *American Journal of Public Health, 105*, 268-273. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2014.302499

Plankey-Videla, N. (2012). Informed consent as process: problematizing informed consent in organizational ethnographies. *Qualitative Sociology, 35*, 1-21. doi:10.1007/s11133-011-9212-2

Pollmann, O. (2012). Quick and sustainable growth: European and Chinese development. *Society and Economy, 34*(1), 3-11. doi:10.1556/SocEc.34.2012.1.2

Population Bulletin. (2013). Dubai Statistic Center. Government of Dubai. Retrieved from http://dsc.gov.ae/EN/Themes/Pages/Publications.aspx

Rad, M. A., Khoshalhan, F., & Glock, C. H. (2014). Optimizing inventory and sales decisions in a two-stage supply chain with imperfect production and backorders. *Computers & Industrial Engineering, 74*, 219-227. doi:10.1016/j.cie.2014.05.004

Roh, J., Hong, P., & Min, H. (2014). Implementation of a responsive supply chain strategy in global complexity: The case of manufacturing firms. *International Journal of Production Economics*, *147*, 198-210. doi:10.1016/j.ijpe.2013.04.013

Roy, S., & Basu, R. (2015). Industrial sickness and its impact on the economy: A case study of Haora district, West Bengal. *Economic Affairs: A Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *60*(1), 57-62. doi:10.5958/0976-4666.2015.00006.6

Roy, S., Chan, T., & Cheema, A. (2014). Price expectations and purchase decisions: Evidence from an online store experiment. *Customer Needs and Solutions, 1*, 117-130. doi:10.1007/s40547-014-0010-3

Rhodes, K. V., & Miller, F. G. (2012). Simulated patient studies: An ethical analysis. *Milbank Quarterly, 90*, 706-724. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0009.2012.00680.x

Rumelt, R. P. (2011). *Good strategy bad strategy: The difference and why it matters*. New York, NY: Crown Business.

Rust, R. T., Moorman, C., & Dickson, P. R. (2002). Getting return on quality: Revenue expansion, cost reduction, or both? *Journal of Marketing, 66*(4), 7-24. doi:10.1509/jmkg.66.4.7.18515

Santos, M., & Ferreira, A. (2012). Conditions, demands and constraints on trainers' activity: a case study in the Portuguese context. *Work, 41*, 5210-5217. doi:10.3233/WOR-2012-0811-5210

Schmitz, C., You-Cheong, L., & Lilien, G. L. (2014). Cross-selling performance in complex selling contexts: An examination of supervisory- and compensation-based controls. *Journal of Marketing*, *78*(3), 1-19. doi:10.1509/jm.12.0421

Schroeder, B., & Denoble, A. (2014). How to design a triple bottom line organization. *Journal of Organization Design, 3*(2), 48-57. doi:10.7146/jod.16726

Seal, W., & Ye, L. (2014). The balanced scorecard and the construction of a management control discourse. *Journal of Accounting & Organizational Change, 10*, 466-485. doi: 10.1108/JAOC/.10.2012.0098

Shishu, Z., & Hae-Ou, S. (2013). The impact of inflation on expenditures and happiness in China. *Journal of Chinese Economics, 1*, 55-76. Retrieved from http://journals.sfu.ca/nwchp/index.php/journal

Singhania, V. (2010). Optimizing managed care rebate strategy to improve returns. *Journal of Medical Marketing*, *10*(1), 71-81. doi:10.1057/jmm.2009.46

Sinkovics, R., & Alfoldi, E. (2012). Progressive focusing and trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Management International Review*, *52*, 817-845. doi:10.1007/s11575-012-0140-5

Snyder, C. (2012). A case study of a case study: Analysis of a robust qualitative research methodology. *Qualitative Report, 17*(26), 1-21. Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR17/snyder

Soliman, F. (2012). Business excellence and business innovation: Should HRM play different roles? *Employment Relations Record, 12*(2), 55-68. Retrieved www.pera.net.au

Sommers, B. D., Arntson, E., Kenney, G. M., & Epstein, A. M. (2013). Lessons from early Medicaid expansions under health reform: Interviews with Medicaid officials. *Medicare & Medicaid Research Review, 3*(4), E1-E19. doi:10.5600/mmrr.003.04.a02

Stankeviciute, E., Grunda, R., & Bartkus, E.V. (2012). Pursuing a cost leadership strategy and business sustainability objectives: Walmart case study. *Journal of Economic and Management 17*, 1200-1208. doi:10.5755/j01.em.17.3.2143

Suleyman, Y., & Ilker, K. (2013). Customer-driven profitability analysis: A management accounting approach through customer portfolio applications. *World of Accounting Science*, *15*(1), 55-71. Retrieved from http://journals.indexcopernicus.com/Muhasebe+Bilim+DA+14+nyasA+Dergisi,p4944,3.html

Taghipour, A., & Frayret, J. (2013). Dynamic mutual adjustment search for supply chain operations planning co-ordination. *International Journal of Production Research, 51*, 2715-2739. doi:10.1080/00207543.2012.737952

Taylor, B. M. (2013). Sustainability and performance measurement: Corporate real estate perspective. *Performance Improvement, 52*(6), 36-45. doi:10.1002/pfi.21356

Theocharous, A., Zopiatis, A., & Philaretou, A. (2015). The social construction of male tourism deviance: The case of Agia Napa (AN), Cyprus. *Sexuality & Culture, 19*, 816-834. doi:10.1007/s12119-015-9293-2

Turcan, R. V. (2011). Toward a theory of international new venture survivability. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship, 9*, 213-232. doi:10.1007/s10843-011-

Unno, M., & Hua, X. (2013). Optimal platform strategies in the smartphone market. *Electronics & Communications in Japan, 96*(7), 1-10. doi:10.1002/ecj.11462

VanderMeer, D., Dutta, K., & Datta, A. (2012). A cost-based database request distribution technique for online e-commerce applications. *MIS Quarterly, 36*, 479-507. Retrieved from www.misq.org

Varini, K., & Sirsi, P. (2012). Social media and revenue management; Where Should the two meet? *Journal of Technology Management for Growing Economies, 3*(1), 33-46. Retrieved from www.journal.chitkara.edu.in

Vinodh, S. S., Prakash, N., & Selvan, K. (2011). Evaluation of agility in supply chains using fuzzy association rules mining. *International Journal of Production Research, 49*, 6651-6661. doi:10.1080/00207543.2010.535044

Vohra, V. (2014). Using the multiple case study design to decipher contextual leadership behaviors in Indian organizations. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods, 12*(1), 54-65. Retrieved from www.ejbrm.com

Vu, H., & Nahm, D. (2013). The determinants of profit efficiency of banks in Vietnam. *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy, 18*, 615-631. doi:10.1080/13547860.2013.803847

Wagner, S. M., Jonke, R., & Eisingerich, A. B. (2012). A strategic framework for spare parts logistics. *California Management Review, 54*(4), 69-92. doi:10.1525/cmr.2012.54.4.69

Wahyuni, D. (2012). The research design maze: Understanding paradigms, cases, methods and methodologies. *Journal of Applied Management Accounting Research, 10*(1), 69-80. Retrieved from http://maaw.info/JAMAR.htm

Watson, D. (2013). Exploring supply chain management rare earth material in United States (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3605791)

Werner, H., & Herman, L. (2012). Adoption of human resource practices within a South African small business: A case study. *Journal of Enterprising Culture, 20*, 459-480. doi:10.1142/S0218495812500197

Wester, K. L. (2011). Publishing ethical research: A step-by-step overview. *Journal of Counselling & Development*, *89*, 301-307. Retrieved from www.counseling.org

Wester, K. L., Borders, L. D., Boul, S., & Horton, E. (2013). Research quality: critique of quantitative articles in the journal of counseling & development. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 91*, 280-290. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.2013.00096.x

Wheals, J., & Petch, M. (2013). A fresh look at consulting and collaboration. *International Journal of Market Research, 55*, 320-322. doi:10.2501/IJMR-2013-027

Williams, A. C., & Kersten, T. A. (2013). Strategies to maintain school district financial solvency: Illinois school business official's recommendations. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, 8*(2), 94-110. Retrieved from http://www.ncpeapublications.org.

Wong, S. K., & Tong, C. (2012). The influence of market orientation on new product success. *European Journal of Innovation Management, 15*, 99-121. doi:10.1108/14601061211192852

Wu, C., Parker, S. K., & De Jong, J. P. (2014). Need for cognition as an antecedent of individual innovation behavior. *Journal of Management, 40*, 1511-1534. doi.10.1177/0149206311429862

Xu, K., Chiang, W. K., & Liang, L. (2011). Dynamic pricing and channel efficiency in the presence of the cost learning effect. *International Transactions in Operational Research, 18*, 579-604. doi:10.1111/j.1475-3995.2011.00816.x

Xu, M. A., & Storr, G. B. (2012). Learning the concept of researcher as instrument in qualitative research. *Qualitative Report, 17*(21), 1-18. Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/index.html

Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Yin, R. K. (2013). Validity and generalization in future case study evaluations. *International Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice, 19*, 321-332. doi:10.1177/1356389013497081

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Designs and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Zhang, H., Zaric, G. S., & Huang, T. (2011). Optimal design of a pharmaceutical price-volume agreement under asymmetric information about expected market size. *Production and Operations Management, 20*, 334-346. doi:10.1111/j.1937-5956.2011.01219.x

Zatta, D., & Kolisch, R. (2014). Profit impact of revenue management in the process industry. *Journal of Revenue and Pricing Management, 13*, 483-507. doi:10.1057/rpm.2014.14

Zimmerman, E., & Racine, E. (2012). Ethical issues in the translation of social neuroscience: A policy analysis of current guidelines for public dialogue in human research accountability in research. *Policies & Quality Assurance, 19*, 27-46. doi:10.1080/08989621.2012.650949

Zhou, W., Chao, X., & Gong, X. (2014). Optimal uniform pricing strategy of a service firm when facing two classes of customers. *Production & Operations Management, 23*, 676-688. doi:10.1111/poms.12171

Zou, P. X., Sunindijo, R. Y., & Dainty, A. R. (2014). A mixed methods research design for bridging the gap between research and practice in construction safety. *Safety*

Science, 70, 316-326. doi:10.1016/j.ssci.2014.07.005

Appendix A: Initial Discussion Brief

The Initial Discussion Brief

The inflation rate in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) has risen to five-year highs in 2014 and raised further by 28% in the first half of 2015. Rent and utility costs, miscellaneous goods and service costs, and communication costs have risen by 361%, 197%, and 262% respectively since 2013. The increase in costs has impacted organizations operational costs, and thereby challenged their profitability. I am a doctoral student at Walden University and conducting an academic none commercial research study on what strategies the business managers considered in sustained or growing their profitability.

I have shortlisted your organization for conducting a case study through face-to-face semistructured interviews of a senior manager responsible for organizational profit and loss and also a focus group interview of two junior managers responsible for implementing strategic directions in the organization. The senior manager interviews will focus on identification of the problem, guiding policies for strategic decisions, and implementation of strategic decisions, while the focus group discussion will focus on how the operational head perceived and communicated the problem to senior management, and how they received and implemented the strategic directions from senior management. During the process, I will request artifacts and evidence such as memos, presentations, or communication documents to support the data. The respondents will have the right to reject my request if they are considered sensitive and confidential.

Further, your organization or the respondents will have all the right to withdraw from the study any time without any obligation.

This study is voluntary. I will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. If you agree to participate in the study, I will follow through this discussion with a formal letter of cooperation for your concurrence and nomination of respondents. Further, I will seek the consent of each of the nominated respondents through a formal letter of consent which articulate their rights and responsibilities in this study.

I confirm that utmost confidentiality of information, concealment of organizations, and respondent’s identity will be maintained during and after the study.

Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation

Letter of Cooperation

(Name of the Research Partner/ Organization)

(Contact Information)

(Date)

Dear……………..

Based on our discussion on your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Strategy and Profitability: Managing Profits in Inflation Economy within the (Name of the research partner/ organization) ___________________________. As part of this study, I authorize you to conduct face-to-face semistructured interviews with our senior manager and conduct the focus group discussions with two of our management team. During the process, you are authorized to audio record the discussions, cross verify the transcripts through memberchecking, and will have access to memos, e-mails, and presentations pertaining to the subject. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: providing the names and contact details of the management team who meets the selection criteria, advice on available meeting rooms to conduct interviews, and share nonsensitive supporting documents that are relevant for the study. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

(Authorization Official)

(Contact Information)

Appendix C: Consent Form A

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study of exploring the strategies of maintaining profitability in an environment of escalating operational cost. The researcher is inviting business managers responsible for profit and loss, business strategy planning and, implementing strategic directions in the organization to be in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

A researcher named Mr. M.J.M. Sharaaz, who is a doctoral student at Walden University, will be conducting the study. The study is part of the academic fulfillment requirement of doctoral degree of the previously mentioned university. The study data are collected and used for academic purpose with no commercial interests.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore the strategies used in maintaining the profitability in the wake of escalating business costs, driven by rent and utility, and transport and communication costs.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in face to face three in-depth interviews of one to two hours each and final fourth meeting to review the transcripts.

- Interviews will be focused on (a) diagnosis of the problem, (b) guiding policies for addressing the problem, and (c) coherent actions taken in mitigating the problem.
- All interviews will be recorded using a voice recording device with an objective transcribing them later, apart from note taking.
- The interviewer may seek for nonsensitive artifacts such as memos, emails, and presentations to support specific instances to understand the process and validate the practices. All such artifacts will have to be de-identified before sharing with the interviewer.
- A focus group interview based on the findings will be conducted with two of the junior managers of the organizations as part of validating the findings.
- The transcripts of the interviews will be presented for participant's review and consensus before adapting for the study analysis.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue. Being in this study would not pose a risk to your safety or wellbeing. A focus group discussion may encounter minor risks of other following what was stated. Your participation and contribution in this study will be appreciated from the perspectives of corporate social responsibility, as the findings of the study will be beneficial for the business practitioners and academics. Further, your contribution to the findings will be a reference point in the society which can be useful for the community and yourself in the future.

Payment:

The study is done on non-profit academic interest and therefore will not be subjected to any form of incentives of remunerations. A summary of the study will be available for sharing once the doctoral study is completed and accepted by the University.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. In addition, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by the researcher in a private locker. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via xxxx@xx.com. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 001-612-312-1210.

Walden University's approval number for this study is 05-16-16-0453194 and it expires on May 15, 2017. The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix D: Consent Form B

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study of exploring the strategies of maintaining profitability in an environment of escalating operational cost. The researcher is inviting business managers responsible for profit and loss, business strategy planning and, implementing strategic directions in the organization to be in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

A researcher named Mr. M.J.M. Sharaaz, who is a doctoral student at Walden University, will be conducting the study. The study is part of the academic fulfillment requirement of doctoral degree of the previously mentioned university. The study data are collected and used for academic purpose with no commercial interests.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore the strategies used in maintaining the profitability in the wake of escalating business costs, driven by rent and utility, and transport and communication costs.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in a single face to face, one to two hour focus group interview with a colleague.

- Interviews will be focused on (a) how the problem was perceived and communicated to senior management (b) the strategic directions of senior management, and (c) how the strategies were implemented
- All interviews will be recorded using a voice recording device with an objective transcribing them later, apart from note taking
- The transcripts of the interviews will be presented for participant's review and consensus before adapting for the study analysis

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue. Further, the discussion process may encounter moderate professional and relationship risk of other participant revealing what is said by you outside discussion group. Being in this study would not pose a risk to your safety or wellbeing. Your participation and contribution in this study will be appreciated from the perspectives of corporate social responsibility, as the findings of the study will be beneficial for the business practitioners and academics. Further, your contribution to the findings will be a reference point in the society which can be useful for the community and yourself in the future.

The discussion points:

1. What influence did inflation have on your performance?
2. How did you communicate these challenges to the senior management?
3. How did the senior management of the organization react to the situation?
4. What strategic changes were made to sustaining the profitability of the business operations?
5. What impact did the new strategy have on your present performance?
6. How would you describe the current performance of your department/ division?
7. Would you like to discuss any additional information in line with our discussion that I may have overlooked?

Payment:

The study is done on non-profit academic interest and therefore will not be subjected to any form of incentives of remunerations. A summary of the study will be available for sharing once the doctoral study is completed and accepted by the University.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. In addition, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by the researcher in a private locker. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via xxxx@xx.com. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 001-612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 05-16-16-0453194 and it expires on May 15, 2017. The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Date of consent ______________________

Participant's Signature ______________________

Researcher's Signature ______________________

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

The proceeding of interviews is guided by an interview protocol to mitigate different challenges of framing interview questions (Honan, 2014). A protocol focused on getting responses specific to the research problem through a framework of guiding questions is deployed. Though the interviews are guided by a protocol, the participants are allowed to express their views freely within the defined scope. A process of probing and follow-up questions are used to allow flexibility while controlling the proceedings (Pezalla et al., 2012).

Respondents

The senior members of the management team in each of the sample organization are the primary respondents for the study. As part of the process of methodological triangulation, a focus group discussion with two of the junior managers from each of the organizations is engaged.

Interview Type

Formal semistructured and focus group discussion are the main data collection techniques used in the study. Interviews are conducted at the respondent's offices to access and view supporting artifacts. Same questions with the same theme are posed for all the participants. Considering the time required for interviewing the respondents, the interviews are done in multiple sessions.

Question type

Open-ended questions as per the planned interview questions are asked of the respondents. The respondents are free to explain their answers in manner and style that suits them. The respondents are not interrupted except for seeking further clarification through probing, and reaffirming the understanding of response by repeating and summarizing the response.

Data Capture and Transcribing

Audiotaping with the consent of respondents is used to capture the interview data. The recordings are manually transcribed. CAQDAS tool, NVivo *10* are used for data analysis.

The Interview

Prior to the commencement of the interview; brief the respondents on their rights, assure confidentiality, and concealment of identity including the documents shared. I will explain the structure of the interview and assurance of maintaining accuracy through member checking process and follow up interviews to review and discuss the transcripts prior to adoption.

In view of facilitating, the respondents to be in line with the scope and framework of the study, an appraisal of the market situation to be done. The below brief will set the theme for the interview questions.

The Brief on Market Situation

Dubai is has earned its reputation as the seventh world's most influential cities and the business hub of the Middle East. Kotkin (2014) ranked the cities based on eight criteria's other than the conventional indicator, gross domestic products. The eight criterial considered were (a) attracted amount of foreign direct investment, (b) concentration of corporate headquarters, (c) number of business niches dominated, (d) air connectivity, (e) strength of producer services, (f) financial services, (g) technology, and media power, and (h) racial diversity (Kotkin, 2014). Conversely, in 2013, Dubai's nonfinancial corporations sectors contributed 90% to the gross domestic products (GDP), which recorded a growth of 5% over 2012 (Gross Domestic Product, 2013). The major contributors of the sector were wholesale, retail trade and repairs amounting to 29%, and manufacturing, transport, storage and communication, amounting to 28% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product, 2013. The GDP statistics and the world influential cities ranking suggest Dubai as an economy dependent on trading and services. The press release from Dubai FDI (2012) elaborating Dubai as trade and services are driven regional hub validates this notion.

The inflation rate in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) has risen to five-year highs in 2014 and raised further by 28% in the first half of 2015 (Inflation and Consumer Price Index, 2015). Rent and utility costs, miscellaneous goods and service costs, and communication costs have risen by 361%, 197%, and 262% respectively since 2013 (Inflation and Consumer Price Index, 2014).

Session 1

Question 1

How do you compare the business operational cost of 2014 against the 2012 and 2013?

Question 2

What is the impact of cost increases to your business operation?

Question 3

How would quantify and compare the impact? Can I see any supporting document on the same (If possible)?

Question 4

How did you mitigate these costs?

Question 5

What are the alternative actions you considered to mitigate the impact to the business?

Question 6

How did you recognize the implications of cost increases to the business?

Session 2

Review of transcripts and discussion on the transcripts accuracy or variances.

Question 1

What were the guiding policies of developing the solution for mitigating the impact of escalating costs?

Question 2

How would you define the alignment of strategic actions to the organization's profitability?

Question 3

What was the process deployed in implementing the new strategy?

Question 4

How did the actions align to the problem?

Session 3

Review of transcripts and discussion on the transcripts accuracy or variances.

Question 1

What challenges did you experience in implementing the new policies/ strategy?

Questions 2

How did you overcome those challenges?

Question 3

How did you measure the effectiveness of the new strategies?

Question 4

Would you like to discuss any additional information in line with our discussion that I may have overlooked?

Concluding Remarks

- Thanking and appreciating for the time and insights
- Permission for follow-up interviews
- Permission for transcript review

- Permission for viewing artifacts
- Permission to conduct a focus group discussion with two of the junior managers
- Permission to discuss their views on the topic and to seek their understanding of the strategy implemented.
- Request for nominating two members for the focus group discussion

Conclusion of Interviews

The interviews will conclude once all clarification are attained, the transcripts are being validated by the respondents, and I have captured the meaning of what was said through member checking. The verification of transcripts and member checking from each of the sessions are obtained before the proceeding of the next session. The final member checking of the last interview session transcripts is obtained in a separate concluding session.

Focus Group Discussion

The Brief on Market Situation

Dubai is has earned its reputation as the seventh world's most influential cities and the business hub of the Middle East. Kotkin (2014) ranked the cities based on eight criteria's other than the conventional indicator, gross domestic products. The eight criterial considered were (a) attracted amount of foreign direct investment, (b) concentration of corporate headquarters, (c) number of business niches dominated, (d) air connectivity, (e) strength of producer services, (f) financial services, (g) technology, and media power, and (h) racial diversity (Kotkin, 2014). Conversely, in 2013, Dubai's nonfinancial corporations sectors contributed 90% to the gross domestic products (GDP), which recorded a growth of 5% over 2012 (Gross Domestic Product, 2013). The major contributors of the sector were wholesale, retail trade and repairs amounting to 29%, and manufacturing, transport, storage and communication, amounting to 28% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product, 2013. The GDP statistics and the world influential cities ranking suggest Dubai as an economy dependent on trading and services. The press release from Dubai FDI (2012) elaborated Dubai as a trade and services are driven regional hub validates this notion.

The inflation rate in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) has risen to five-year highs in 2014 and raised further by 28% in the first half of 2015 (Inflation and Consumer Price Index, 2015). Rent and utility costs, miscellaneous goods and service costs, and communication costs have risen by 361%, 197%, and 262% respectively since 2013 (Inflation and Consumer Price Index, 2014).

The objective of discussion is to understand the impact of the impact of the problem to your business units and how management responded to these problems. Your experience in this process can be different or similar in nature. The interview intends to capture your experiences in identifying, communicating the problem to your superiors and how did you implement the strategic direction received from your superiors. Further, this interview will be audio recorded transcribing and analysis.

Question 1

What influence did inflation have on your performance?

Question 2

How did you communicate these challenges to the senior management?

Question 3

How did the senior management of the organization react to the situation?

Notes: Probe on the primary findings in the event those elements were not clear or absent

Question 4

What strategic changes were made to sustaining the profitability of the business operations? Notes: Probe on the primary findings in the event those elements were not clear or absent

Question 5

What impact did the new strategy have on your present performance? Notes: Probe on the primary findings in the event those elements were not clear or absent

Question 6

How would you describe the current performance of your department/ division?

Question 7

Would you like to discuss any additional information in line with our discussion that I may have overlooked?